

SPECIAL

FLYING SAUCER PREDICTS THIRD WORLD WAR!

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MAGAZINE

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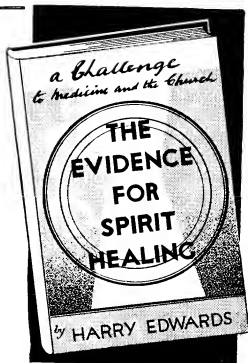
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Contents

**MYSTIC
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Issue No. 4

Editors: Ray Palmer, Bea Mahaffey

TRUE STORIES

- I MEET THE FLYING SAUCER MAN!.....Orfeo Matthew Angelucci 6
(As told to Paul M. Vest)
I CARRIED A WITCH ON MY BACK!.....Louis Sztrokay 15
THE MOON THAT ROSE TWICE IN ONE NIGHT...James Samuel Stemons 20
A VOICE SAVED MY LIFE.....Carol McKinney 129

ARTICLES

- MENTAL PROJECTIONWalter G. Smith 71
DO ETHERIC ARMIES EXIST?.....Robert Rowan 98

FICTION

- MISTRESS OF THE KAMA-LOKA.....Peter Worth 30
MING CHAMilton Mann 76
... LEST YE BE JUDGED.....Sanandana Kumara 102

FEATURES

- EDITORIALLY SPEAKINGRay Palmer 4
MYSTERY IN THE NEWSRay Palmer 118
THE SEANCE CIRCLEThe Readers 120

Cover Painting by Malcolm Smith illustrating ARE THERE ETHERIC ARMIES?

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Editorially Speaking...

EVER since 1913 evolutionists, including many of the best scholars in the study of fossil bones, have thought the Piltdown man to be the earliest specimen of man, one that lived 500,000 years ago. Evolution's prize package was given the formidable sounding name of *Eoanthropus Dawsoni*." But on November 21, 1953, the British Natural History Museum admitted in a bulletin that the famous fossil was a fake. The skull was found to be of human origin, but the jawbone was that of a modern ape, altered with chemicals to make it appear ancient. After devaluating the skull cap from 500,000 years to 50,000 years old, the report said that the faking of the jawbone was so unscrupulous "as to find no parallel in the history of paleontological discovery." Some scholars, however, had pointed out years ago that the jawbone was not human, but ape!

Now that the famous "relic" is an admitted fake, how do the evolutionists feel? Declared one of the world's most famous anthropologists: "It doesn't disturb our ideas of human evolution at all!" Clearly, the evolutionists' theories cannot be of much consequence even to themselves—if they can discard 450,000 years from a much-vaunted "relic" and not be disturbed!

As far as your editor is concerned it's a case now of "smile pardner, when you talk about evolution." It may even be true, but there isn't a whisker of proof.

Which little item seems to be a good place to launch this editorial. **MYSTIC** Magazine is very much in the position of being accused of the very thing we have decried in the foregoing—if not perpetrating a fraud, at least allowing a theory to assume the appearance of a fact. Just what is there about mystically-inclined people which tends to make them go overboard for their beliefs? Not that they haven't a world of reason to think about such things as **MYSTIC** presents, and to do constant research, even to the extent of devoting much of their lives to such research, into all sorts of things ranging from spiritualism to reincarnation, from flying saucers to protoplasm, from angels to demons, from ancient history and legend to archeology. But do they have a right to *assume*, and in so doing, *decry* the honest research of those who have tended to the other viewpoint, the strictly materialistic and mechanistic? Somewhere there is a middle-road where both can meet. **MYSTIC** is trying to be that middle road. That is why we present both fiction and fact.

With our third issue we have received many letters saying we

are improving fast, and that the third issue was a vast improvement over the first two issues. The reason for this was two-fold: our factual articles were slightly less than sensational, and our fictional articles were so solidly based on mystic fact and theory that they made extremely intelligent and revealing reading. Added to this, our inclusion of theoretical articles and a large readers' letter-section where ideas can be exchanged, has resulted in a stature for the magazine that is rather imposing in view of its extreme youth.

Naturally we are pleased to receive so many enthusiastic compliments, and we propose to continue along on the path we have chosen. With this fourth issue we think we are striking a still higher note, and we are quite frankly viewing the future with an extremely interested anticipation. The cooperative action of the readership of the magazine is almost astounding. That much will come of it we feel sure.

Perhaps the most important item in this issue is the sequel to Orfeo Matthew Angelucci's original "I Traveled in a Flying Saucer" which, no matter how fantastic it sounded, has received little or no adverse comment. Now we present the further adventures of Mr. Angelucci with his strange saucer contact, and as with the first, we can only say that whatever happened to him, he is telling

the truth about it as it happened to him.

Of great interest is the fact that through MYSTIC's publication of his experience, he was invited on a speaking tour throughout the east, under the auspices of that fabulous personality in prophecy, the Reverend Elder Charles Beck, of Buffalo, New York, whose broadcasts over station WKBW are listened to by more than three million persons every Sunday, and who is pastor of a new kind of church where the entertainment talents of many are put to good use to provide religious services with a new zest, with a note of happiness. The choir and quartettes and individual singing entertainers who give out with religious songs and harmony are of a calibre seldom found even in the highest-paid radio programs, and the trumpet playing furore raised by the Elder Beck in his performance of Gabriel calling his flock is nothing short of sensational.

Elder Beck, who has made some flying saucer predictions which have gained him the attention of the Pentagon Generals, and who is a staunch reader of MYSTIC, is a true mystic, and his sermons have great power to sway his audience. His interest in Mr. Angelucci, and his response to MYSTIC's presentation of him is highly flattering.

Beginning with the next issue of MYSTIC, we are going to pre-

(Continued on page 68)

I MEET THE FLYING SAUCER MAN!

By Orfeo Matthew Angelucci

(As told to Paul M. Vest)



This is a sequel to the story "I Traveled In A Flying Saucer" in the November issue of MYSTIC, which received so much comment that it resulted in Mr. Angelucci making a nationwide tour under the auspices of Elder Charles Beck, the famous "prophesying evangelist" who is heard each Sunday over Radio Station WKBW in Buffalo, New York. In this continuation of Mr. Angelucci's amazing adventure, we meet the man from the flying saucer and hear from his lips a prediction of another world war to come and of the final peace and brotherhood of man to follow.

IN the first issue of MYSTIC, November 1953, I told of my first eerie contact with the flying saucers and subsequent trip in a saucer hundreds of miles into outer space.

But in neither of those astounding experiences did I actually have personal contact with a saucer being. In the first incredible instance I saw their images projected on a kind of vast, luminous screen which appeared above an open field, between two small fluorescent green discs. During my entire trip in the saucer I was, I believe, entirely alone and heard only the voices of a space being apparently transmitted from a huge mother ship.

Since that first article appeared I have received a great number of encouraging letters and many phone calls from people who assured me of their whole-hearted belief in my story. Also, as a direct result of my story in MYSTIC, I was asked to give a series of talks concerning my experiences, in the Eastern States, which I did. Everywhere I found people tremendously interested and receptive to the message of the saucer beings. But everyone wanted further knowledge and more information about our mysterious visitors.

Hence in this article I wish to tell you of my first strange meeting here on earth with an extra-terrestrial being — a meeting that has left me fully convinced that

they are of an evolution so advanced beyond ours that it would be utterly impossible for us to understand or comprehend them.

Following the emotional shock of my profound and bewildering trip in the flying saucer, I went about in a veritable daze for weeks. I returned to my job at Lockheed and resumed the routine of my daily affairs, but I was like an automaton—a dweller in two worlds and at home in neither. It is almost impossible to explain my state of mind. Suffice it to say that during my trip in the saucer I was granted a spiritual initiation by the saucer beings which in all truth left me something of a stranger to my own planet, earth. Only those aware of the inner secrets of nature will understand what I mean. In the illusion of Time I was expendable. In simpler words, I had prematurely attained a degree of enlightenment and hence could never again find contentment upon earth.

I longed to tell the world—to blazen out the truth of my discoveries; yet I knew that for the greater part I must forever remain silent. Among other glimpses of Truth, I attained the realization that **TIME IS NON-EXISTENT**. What we call time exists only in the physical world and is an illusion of the senses. Also I know now that our conception of space is entirely erroneous. But who could I convince of these and other truths—who would believe me?

But because **THEY** had requested that I tell earthlings of my experiences, I told many persons about my trip in the flying saucer. Outside of my family nearly everyone laughed and ridiculed me. I was the butt of numerous jokes. Someone was always wise-cracking, "Are your saucer pals going to show up tonight, Orfeo?" Or, "Tell one of the saucers to land over at the Drive-In Theatre, Orfeo, and then we'll all believe it!" Such remarks invariably brought forth gales of laughter at my expense. But I no longer cared—I **KNEW**, and that was enough!

But as the days and weeks passed following my fantastic trip in that saucer and nothing more happened I began to feel a little uncertain. The constant ridicule and laughter created even more doubts. My insistence upon the truth of my experiences finally appeared to be alienating my friends and even my family from me. My story was unbelieved upon earth and the mysterious visitors were doing nothing to aid me. I actually began to doubt my own sanity. To wonder if the bizarre experiences had been an illusion or hallucination of some sort. And yet an inner tribunal of Truth assured me that such was not the case for with **THEM** I had **SEEN** and **KNOWN REALITY**—and I could never forget that.

On the night of August 2nd I was helping out Mabel, my wife, at the Los Feliz Drive-In Theatre

snack bar where she is employed.

About 11 o'clock I went outside for a breath of fresh air. Over the hills to the west I noticed a fuzzy green light apparently hanging suspended in the sky. I watched it for several moments; then went inside and called Mabel and some of the others to come out and see it. Mabel and seven or eight others saw the mysterious light hanging motionless in the sky over the hill. Unable to explain it, some of them declared it must be a helicopter hovering in the air. Others thought it might be a high street lamp of some sort.

But when after four or five minutes the "street lamp" climbed slowly and *silently* into the heavens and suddenly vanished, no one had much to say. But for some perverse reason none of them wanted to admit that it was actually a flying saucer.

As they tramped back into the cafe laughing about "Orfeo and his flying saucers," a depressing wave of discouragement passed over me. It was useless, I thought—absolutely useless to talk anymore to anyone about the saucers or my experiences. Feeling greatly disheartened and very much alone, I decided to leave and walk home.

As I cut across the vacant lots, the Hyperion Avenue Freeway Bridge loomed huge and dark ahead of me. The sky was overcast and the dense, oblique shadows from the vast concrete struc-

ture were heavier and eerier than usual. Yet in the shadows of the dark archways of the bridge I had come to feel a kind of warmth and welcome—a spiritual communion with a vastly greater and more kindly world. For it was in the shadows of the huge bridge that I had come upon the saucer which had carried me out of this world.

I was thinking of these things when I suddenly became aware of someone approaching from out of the darkness. I was startled for I'd never met anyone before "so late at night taking the short-cut beneath the bridge. I was about to call out a word of greeting when it dawned upon me that the stranger was coming from a *dead-end* of the bridge. My first thought was that someone had been lying in wait for me—possibly to rob me. But before I could become alarmed, I heard the stranger call, "Greetings, Orfeo!"

My heart almost stopped beating for immediately I recognized the vibrant, beautiful voice of the Being who had spoken to me in the saucer.

I stopped dead in my tracks, utterly speechless, and stared at the approaching figure. But then a wave of joy and gratitude flooded over me, and I finally replied falteringly, "Greetings to you."

He laughed pleasantly. "I know that in your mind you have given me a name—I who have remained nameless to you," he said gently.

"You may call me by that name, Orfeo—it is as good as any other and has more inner significance to you than any name I might give you."

"Neptune . . ." I spoke the name slowly and reverently. For it was indeed the name I had given to this great and mysterious being. Then I added, "At last you have come to give me strength and faith."

He was near enough then for me to see that he was several inches taller than I and similar in outline to a well-built man. But the shadows were so heavy that I couldn't make out the details of his figure. But just to be in his presence once more was to sense again a tremendous uplifting wave of strength, harmony, joy and serenity.

"Come, Orfeo," he said gently, continuing on past me. "For we have many things to discuss tonight."

I followed him as he strode ahead of me through the dense shadows. I could hear his solid footsteps upon the gravelled path which convinced me beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was no phantom or illusion.

He led me to a better lighted area near the bend of Glendale Boulevard where it goes up and over the Bridge. I was actually trembling in anticipation of my first actual look at the mysterious visitor from another world.

When he turned I saw his face

—the same wonderful, expressive countenance I had seen on the luminous screen. I again noticed especially his extremely large, dark and expressive eyes and the nobility and beauty of his features which actually seemed to radiate warmth and kindliness.

Then I noticed that he was wearing a kind of uniform—bluish in color, perfectly tailored and tightly fitted to the outlines of his body. But it was a strange kind of uniform apparently without seams, buttons, pockets, trimmings or design of any sort. In fact it fitted so perfectly that it was almost like a part of his body.

But as I studied him I became aware of an astonishing phenomenon—I could see his uniform and figure clearly but it *wavered* occasionally, as though I were viewing it through *rippling water*. And the color did not remain *solid* and *uniform* but varied and changed in spots, which reminded me of an imperfectly tuned television set. Only his face and hands remained immobile and stable as though not partially obscured by a film of rippling water.

Headlights from approaching automobiles fell upon us from time to time and I remember wondering what *manner* of being my companion appeared to be to those in the passing cars. Did they see him at all? If so, did he appear as solid and substantial as myself?

Utterly overcome with awe, I was unable to speak. For in those

momentous few minutes I knew that I was in the presence of an intelligence as far above me as I am above an animal.

He moved forward again, motioning for me to follow him. Without speaking he led me down the sharp concrete declivity into the bed of the dry Los Angeles River. There he sat down upon a large stone and motioned for me to do likewise.

For a time he was silent and I was acutely conscious of a tremendous vibrational field about him — a tangible emanation of serenity, brotherly love, and ineffable joy. In all sincerity, I say that in his presence I felt like a grub that had momentarily and miraculously crawled up out of the muck and mire and experienced the wonder of the sun.

At last he said quietly, and I was struck again by the depth and vibrational quality of his superb voice, "You sense and understand intuitively many things I cannot say directly to you, Orfeo. You have just fully realized that we are not like earthmen in that WE function in dimensions UNKNOWN TO YOUR WORLD. Earth is a three-dimensional world and because of this it is preponderantly false. I may tell you that to the entities of certain other worlds earth is regarded as 'the accursed planet'—'the home of the reprobate, fallen ones' Others call your earth 'the home of sorrows.' For earth's evolution is evolution

through pain, sorrow, sin, suffering and the illusion of physical death. Believe me, all evolutions are not similar to Earth's, despite the *present* beliefs of your scientists."

As I heard these strange words, my heart and mind cried out, "But why must it be so—why should earth's people know pain, suffering and death?"

He looked up into the heavens and in the soft light I saw deep compassion in his face as he said slowly, "The answer to that question is one of the mysteries of the illusion of time. But I can tell you this—such conditions did not always prevail among the entities who now inhabit earth. Once there was another planet in your solar system—the fairest and most radiant of all the planets. That planet was the original home of earthlings. In their native home they knew not pain, sorrow, suffering, sickness or physical death. But in the glory and wonder of their world they grew proud and arrogant. They made war among themselves and finally turned against the Great Giver of Life. Ultimately they destroyed their own planet which today exists only as a sterile and barren ring of asteroids and debris in the solar system. In order that those entities might gain understanding, compassion and brotherly love they were born into the animalistic, material evolution of a lesser planet, Earth. Suffering, sorrow,

frustration and death became their Teacher. Their symbol became the man-beast. Each man must work out his own destiny and salvation. In the illusion of Time and through repeated births and deaths each entity slowly and painfully evolves spiritually toward its former glorified state of divinity. Eventually all the entities of earth will again attain their lost heritage. They will have learned understanding, compassion and true love for God and their fellows."

I pondered his strange words thoughtfully, thinking as I did so that what he had said explained many apparent mysteries about man and his lot upon earth. But soon my attention was distracted once more as I saw the figure of Neptune strangely "waver" again. Suddenly the question was in my mind, "Was the Being really **THERE** in the truest physical sense—or was he a kind of mysterious *projection* into the physical world from other dimensions? Did I see him in his *true form* and ordinary state of being—or, to simplify matters, had he merely projected an approximation of a man's appearance?" These strange thoughts frightened me a little and carried me into too deep waters.

A reassuring smile lighted his face, "Don't be alarmed, Orfeo," he said gently. "The answer to the troublesome question in your mind is both yes and no. On earth form, color, individuality and the material aspect of things is all

important. In our world these illusions are of practically no importance at all. Suffice it to say that *for you* I am an approximation of myself as I really am. I can't make it any clearer in three-dimensional terms."

His words convinced me that I had been right in my intuitive perception of him. As the full import of his greater wisdom and vision came to me, I thought about my own troubled fellows of earth. Impetuously, I asked, "What about earth now? On the surface all seems calm, but I know we are drifting on dangerous and treacherous waters. Many people are troubled and afraid about the hydrogen bomb, the creeping menace of Communism, and so many other things."

When Neptune spoke his voice was calm and dispassionate, "Communism, Earth's present fundamental enemy, masks beneath its banner the spearhead of the united forces of evil. Along with good, all men have evil in their hearts to a degree. But some are much more evil than others. Communism is a necessary evil and now exists upon earth as do venomous creatures, famines, blights, tyrannies, cataclysms—all are to be combated, understood and ultimately vanquished. Evil is eventually self-destructed!"

He paused and once more I noticed his "uniform" darkening and lightening in spots, as though it were made of restless pale bluish

clouds and patches of moonlight. Then, I held my breath as he continued, "Yes, war will come again to your earth. We are powerless to prevent it. Millions in your land will fight to the end for their cherished ideals and freedom of the human mind. The clouds are on the horizon—dark and ominous, but overhead beams the rainbow—infinite and eternal. Mankind will survive Armageddon and awake to a new more glorious day of fellowship and honest brotherly love. In the great new Age of Earth all will forget their bitter hurts and build constructively together upon the solid foundation of the Brotherhood of Man."

He stopped speaking and turned his radiant eyes full upon me. In the half-light his countenance was truly resplendent. As always in my encounters with these incredible Beings I again felt infinitely humble, lowly and somehow false and hypocritical.

"There is not much more I can tell you now, Orfeo," he said. "Since the first publicized modern sighting of our discs by Kenneth Arnold thousands upon earth have come to believe in us. Many have actually seen our discs. Some have seen us clairvoyantly. Others have communicated with us clairaudiently. Still others recognize the truth of our existence and greater scope of our being, through intuitive perception. But as far as official proof of ourselves, which so many clamor for, we cannot offer

that. Official proof of the existence of our discs will come. But for us to attempt physically to contact mankind through any so-called authoritative source would be only useless and possibly disastrous for them. Nearly all three-dimensional beings have no concept of, nor could they possibly understand extra-dimensional beings. Tonight in visiting you I have broken a Divine Code—the Code of 'Hands-off,' as regards any interference in the affairs of Earth. Active Cosmic Law will see the necessary amends made."

He looked at me; his strange eyes suddenly saddened. For a moment I had the uncanny feeling that in his greater vision I appeared to him only as a fleeting, insubstantial shadow, utterly without reality as he knew it. In that revealing instant I knew that we of earth are as far removed from THEM as the Earth is from the Sun.

After a while he said, "I would shake your hand in token of our momentous meeting here tonight. But I cannot. I have gone too far already. For my transgression WE must now recede an equal degree from you. The immutable law of Cause and Effect upon Earth will be governed accordingly. As a result, but few will believe or even hear your account of our meeting. In the over-all picture your story will in no way change conditions upon earth. Neither will any actual earthly event be either has-

tened or retarded because of our meeting. At most your story will give only greater faith and inner conviction to the FEW—but it is an important FEW! The ways of God are immutable and apparent only to those who have spiritual discernment. In the illusion of Time all things will be fulfilled in their proper time."

I found that I was trembling and my nerves fairly quivering. Whether from sheer emotion or actually from being within the vibratory range of "Neptune," I don't know. I longed to thank him—to express the great feeling of gratitude in my heart, but I didn't know quite how. Falteringly, I said, "From the bottom of my heart I thank you, 'Neptune.' I pledge my very life to you and the Beings of your world—that greater understanding may come to mankind."

"We know you will not fail us, Orfeo," he replied. "No other contact may be made at this time. But have no further doubts about the reality of your experiences. The Road is open now—walk it as you will. Your failure will be my own. But I smile upon you for the increased numbers who will come to know us in a truer aspect and to believe in us because of you. Strength and encouragement will be given to the millions who will rise courageously to meet the fiery trials ahead. I tell you this—the fury of the next war will break when it is least expected—when

all talk is of peace. I cannot say more."

With these prophetic words, "Neptune" extended his hand to me. But recalling his words, I turned away and did not grasp it.

He smiled and his face actually seemed to radiate light. "Orfeo, my brother!" he said with genuine affection. "For my sake you refused to break the Code. My trust is forever in you, Orfeo. In your simple action you have cleansed me from my contact with this ground."

He paused; then added, "Soon we shall recede from Earth, Orfeo—and yet in reality we shall never be far away. Later, we shall return, but not to you, beloved friend."

When I made no reply, he said, "I'm thirsty, Orfeo. Perhaps you know where we might get a drink of water?"

"Oh yes . . . yes sir," I answered eagerly, getting quickly to my feet. I remembered a small, nearby store that remained open all night. "Please wait here—I'll be right back," I added as I left him and clambered up the embankment.

As I hurried toward the store, I turned and looked back at the Hyperion Bridge. Beneath the high center arch I made out the hazy outline of a kind of ghostly "Igloo" which I immediately recognized as a saucer similar to the one I rode in.

At the store I bought two bot-

tles of lemon soda and hastened back. But as I approached I was disappointed to see that the ghostly saucer was no longer beneath the arch of the bridge. Quickening my pace, I almost ran to the spot where I had left "Neptune," but he was no longer there. Actually, I wasn't too surprised for I'd had a premonition he wouldn't be there when I returned.

I tossed the sodas away and sank down upon the ground. The place was appallingly desolate without him. I felt so acutely alone—so helpless and deserted—like a child left alone in a dark room when the light is suddenly extinguished. I looked upward and my eyes hopefully searched the skies. High in the western heavens I saw a soft, fuzzy green light which hung for a moment—then shot away and vanished.

"Farewell, 'Neptune'" I said softly as I felt my eyes grow moist. "I know now earth is not yet ready for a meeting with the beings from your world. But in the dawning of Earth's great New Age, that day will come, friend. When we have learned the meaning of true brotherly love; when we have overcome to a greater degree the evil inherent in our selfish hearts, then perhaps we will be worthy to meet the infinitely wiser and gentler brothers of your world. In those days your fellows will visit us openly and joyfully—no longer will earth be 'the accursed planet—home of sorrows.'"

Truth is ever stranger than fiction, and in proof of it, MYSTIC Magazine presents the following stories from our readers, each affirmed as absolute truth by the tellers. Down through the ages these adventures have happened, and today, more than ever before, they are happening. Incredible stories, so fantastic as to disturb the mind. What do they mean? What do they prove? If you have a similar story to tell, here is your chance to relate it.

TRUE

Mystic Adventures

I CARRIED A WITCH ON MY BACK!

By Louis Sztrokay

IT happened when I was 20 years old, tall, strong and hardened from gymnastics and sports. My parents weren't well off, so I couldn't continue my study in college. I got a job as a junior clerk in a notary's office. This sudden change in my life made me very unhappy. I was a townsman, I liked the highlands, the forests and mountains of my country, I liked to go with my friends to

the swimming pool, the movies and to enjoy skiing in the Alps. It looked then as though all that was at an end. The small village where I got my job was settled in the Hungarian lowland. There was nothing else beside plain, endless pasture and wheat fields. To hold a conversation with the farmers or the few intelligent people who lived there, wasn't, I should say, a pleasure. On Sunday afternoons

they had parties; there were the notary, the parson, the doctor, the postmaster, the chief of the railroad-station and the teacher of the grammar-school (as well as their families) present, but the topic of conversation was always about livestock, crops and country-life. They weren't interested in anything else.

"Until your apartment in the fire-brigade building is fixed," my boss, the notary told me as I arrived, "you will live at Mrs. Barabas' home. The watchman will accompany you there and help you to carry your luggage."

We walked trudging with my two heavy suitcases along the dusty, broad mainstreet and the black-bearded watchman used the occasion to tell me something about my new landlady.

"Take care, my friend," said he with benevolence, "Mrs. Barabas is known as a witch!"

"Okay, Papa!" answered I, because I didn't believe in such a superstition.

"Don't laugh," said the watchman, "her servant saw once through the key-hole, how she bewitched a heap of horsedung changing it into cheese, how she cooked cheese-cake from it and gave it to her husband to eat. Poor man, after he ate the dessert, he soon died."

"And what happened to the servant?" asked I.

"The fellow quit his job immediately and went back to his own village. I haven't seen him since

that time."

I kept silence while the watchman pursued the discourse:

"Mrs. Barabas bewitched her son Pista too. Until the boy was 10 years old, he was healthy and normal. Now, he is an idiot!"

Uh, to live with a witch and an idiot, I thought, won't be a joy. The beginning of my new life seemed to be like unpleasant fun. In the meantime after we stepped into Mrs. Barabas' house and I met her, I found the woman very neat and kindly. She was about 40, not tall, not short, not beautiful, not ugly, only her deep set black eyes had a peculiar, uncanny glimmer. The livingroom that I got was nice and painfully clean. Really, I could be satisfied.

Shortly it became clear that the notary didn't need me for his office. There he had a scribbler who did a great deal of the work. The boss and I were busy from early morning till evening with the husbandry. He had 40 acres in rent, 3 horses, 9 cows, sheep, fatted-hogs, innumerable hens, ducks and geese. Every day I went on horseback to the fields and came home in the evening dusty and tired. I liked this more than the office-work hemmed in by four walls. By my wolf-sized hunger (I got free board at the notary's home) I never could satisfy. This fact was very soon perceived by Mrs. Barabas. One evening she knocked at the door of my room and brought in for me, with a bright and friend-

ly smile, smoked bacon, sausage and fresh homemade bread.

"I know," said she, "you are famished at the notary's. Would you eat that simple farmer's food? I think, you will find this very tasteful."

I couldn't contradict. The well-smoked bacon, the richly seasoned sausage and the fresh bread. I devoured all the fine foods like a hungry dog. Mrs. Barabas enjoyed my big appetite.

"Thanks a lot!" said I after the meal.

"You are very welcome!" answered she. "I am sure you would like to have some good drink, but I don't keep in my house wine or brandy. Maybe, I could serve you a special tea, if you would like it."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself, Mrs. Barabas!" I protested, but the sound of my voice betrayed that I thought otherwise.

I think the tea had been already prepared, because Mrs. Barabas was back in the next minute. Indeed, the taste of the steaming drink was excellent, just its red color was curious.

"How do you like it?" asked she.

"Fine!" replied I and snapped with the tongue. "Is it perhaps camomilla tea?"

"Oh no!" laughed Mrs. Barabas. "I wouldn't tell you the secret of this mixing. I gather the leaves every year in autumn in the forest of Csorna. It is composed of many medicinal herbs and the tea is very healthful. But now, I

had better go to sleep. Good night!"

"Good night, Mrs. Barabas, and thanks again!"

She left and I reached for a book to read a bit before I went to bed. Scarcely had I read two pages when a special feeling seemed to overcome me. I must have lost consciousness. The "I am" in me fell slowly but surely before the magic power of a strange will. My eyes grew dim and I could see the objects in the room but dimly. My last conscious thought was that I was ill, would have to go to bed. It was admirable that in spite of my indisposition, my steps on the short distance from the table to the bed weren't uncertain. As I lay clothed on my bed, I felt drunken and blind. Everything became turbid, I was unable to think. I shouldn't say that this situation was equal to swooning, because my sixth sense permitted me to distinguish between light and darkness, but I am sure that I was no more than half conscious, with my muddled instinctive knowledge finally reduced to nothing, only a sense, a feeling, without ability to perceive reality.

Then something mysterious happened. I heard the opening of the door. Somebody stepped in, came to the bed and stood a long time bowed upon me. Near to blow up from expectation and strained attention, I tried to get a clear impression, but my brain wouldn't work. Only I felt that an alien will commanded me to stand up, then

something warm surrounded my neck, a burden weighed down my shoulders, and my legs began automatically to walk with obedience to the strange imperious wish. Really, it was uncanny! It seemed to me, that I became a ghost. I marched with my burden on my shoulders, I didn't know where, I didn't know how far, I didn't need either direction or sight. My stride was strong, quick and sure. I didn't feel weakness or weariness. The unknown and invincible strange will mastered me absolutely.

Next morning I awoke lying on my bed in the same position as I lay me down last evening. Awful headaches tortured me the whole day. Sometimes I felt a cobweb before my eyes and tried instinctively to wipe it away with my hand. In vain I wracked my brain. What had happened with me last night after I drank the tea? But I couldn't remember any more than I have already described.

One week passed away and on Saturday morning the notary said to me:

"Tomorrow you can move into your new apartment. Would you tell Mrs. Barabas she may get her rent in the office?"

Again my stomach was still only half-filled as I went home from dinner. I meditated. Wouldn't it be better to have my board beginning the next month in a restaurant? But I always came to the conclusion: my small salary could not cover this luxury. Mrs. Barabas

was cast down by the message I brought her.

"I am very sorry that you already have to leave my home!" said she sadly, then all of a sudden her countenance lighted up and she spoke to me very impressively: "May I dish-up for your leave-taking a good dinner? You won't refuse it! Is it not so? I cooked today stuffed bell-peppers in tomato sauce with sour cream. You told me once that was the food you liked the best. I will bring it immediately!"

"But, Mrs. Barabas, please ease!" I called after her, but she was out and in a few minutes the delicious smelling meal was set on the table. I was indeed always hungry—if I hadn't been I would surely on this occasion have said: "No, thanks!" But . . . hmm . . . I thought "the devil take it. I'll eat it." I attacked the food with energetic recklessness and the last bit vanished. Indeed, my landlady was an excellent cook and . . . I suddenly froze . . . she had brought in a cup of her bloodred magical tea!

"Because you like it so very much!" said she with a kindly smile and put the cup before me on the table. "Please, drink it while it is hot."

It cost me much to hide my shuddering. I kept quiet in my terror, then:

"Thanks . . . thanks . . . Mrs. Barabas!" I stammered. "I shall drink it a little later, now I am

stuffed full like a cabbage-cask. I have to blow out, otherwise I explode."

The gracious fate helped me. In the next room Pista the idiot began to cry; he had got one of his attacks and raged like a mad bull. Mrs. Barabas made haste to calm him and in this minute as I was alone, I decided on a plan that I immediately perpetrated. To open the window and to pour out the tea to the street was the work of the twinkling of an eye. I shut the window and put the empty cup back on the table. With that Mrs. Barabas would believe I had drunk the tea. Truth to tell, I trembled from excitement as I lay down on my bed as I had done a week ago, and imitated unconsciousness. I waited events, whether reality or dream I did not know.

It took a long time for Pista to calm down and in the meantime I had time to think upon the matter of how to act my role, without betraying myself. All at once I heard a noise at the door. I squinted my eyelids, hardly breathing and watched. The doorhandle squeaked. Soundless as a cat Mrs. Barabas stepped in. Her first step, as I had guessed, took her to the table to get assurance that I had drunk the tea. Then she came noiselessly to the bed, bent over me and listened for an eternity to my breathing. How I kept myself motionless as she swung her hand above my eyes, I don't know. Then something surprising happened.

Mrs. Barabas took a chair, stood upon it and spoke in a very soft voice:

"Come! Come!"

I knew the call was addressed to me. I raised up and walked stiffly like a hypnotised person to her. She caught me by the shoulders and compelled me to turn my back to her, then she lifted and swung firstly her left leg, then the right one up on to my shoulders and so sat upon me as on a mounted horse.

"Go!" commanded she and now her voice sounded imperious.

Hesitating only a moment I marched through the opened door into the yard, across the long orchard out to the fields. It was very simple. My rider directed me by turning my head in the demanded direction. There was a full-moon and that was good fortune, else I would have stumbled over the unevennesses of the ground. Our journey led us across the large community-pasture to the top of a small hill, where we stopped. I could feel rather than see what kind of secret motions Mrs. Barabas made with her arms toward the moon. Had they had an occult significance?

Then we travelled back the same way to the house. My living burden was not too heavy, but after the long distance I had had to carry it, I felt how the drops of sweat ran down my back. We arrived in my room. My rider slid down from my shoulders, led me to the bed

and made efforts to get my body in the same position in which she had found it. Mrs. Barabas turned off the light and disappeared from the room noiselessly like a ghost.

That's the story. Neither widened, nor shortened. Every child

knows that witches ride on brooms. That they also use men for their rides, I didn't know until I had this adventure. Or was Mrs. Barabas not a witch? If not, what then?



THE MOON THAT ROSE TWICE IN ONE NIGHT

By James Samuel Stemons

Learn of the philosophers always to look for natural causes in all extraordinary events; when such natural causes are wanting, recur to God. Count de Gabalis.

MY parents reared me, a brother and a sister on our 160-acre homestead in western Kansas, near a tiny village called Nicodemus. The greater part of my life was spent on that farm until I was 23 years of age. Not very long before shaking the dust of that barren prairie from my feet for the last time, I had an experience which was so astounding that I would not dream of making it the subject of a serious document but for the fact that it was absolutely and literally true, and that it was somewhat in keeping with many latter day happenings which defy all rational explanations.

On a farm two miles north of Nicodemus lived Oscar Harris, at

whose home I had attended a party on the night of the incident in question. This made the total distance from my home to that of the party about three and one half miles.

The Harris residence faced the south. I went to the door shortly before 11 o'clock that night, and noticed that the stars were shining brightly, and that the full moon would be setting in less than an hour. I was thus reminded that it was about time for me to go home and to bed. Upon re-entering the house, however, I became engrossed in what was going on, and time passed more quickly than I realized. Finally, glancing at a clock, I was astonished to see that it was nearly three o'clock. Remembering that it was against my father's rules for us children to keep late hours, I arose with a start and said:

"Come, Joe, it's time for us to go home!"

Joe Fletcher was one of the few young men who lived in Nicodemus. He and I had been friends from early childhood, and since I had to go through that village to reach my home, we quite naturally accompanied each other.

I was riding Rose, my favorite mount, a beautiful bay mare four years old and gentle as a lamb. Joe was riding Daisy, a spirited little black filly.

The late December air was cold and bracing. The earth, devoid of snow, was frozen solid. The sky was cloudless, save for a narrow strip of cloud that obscured the eastern horizon, and from behind which I noticed that the moon was just rising, announcing her advent with a thousand spangles of light. I took but little notice of that sight, however, for Joe and I, being full of the vivacity of youth, were soon laughing and jesting about the events of the evening. We soon reached Nicodemus, and bade each other good-night.

The remainder of my journey was almost directly westward. Upon leaving Joe, I instinctively turned my face toward that cloud in the east, from behind which the moon was still making futile efforts to show the outline of her face. As I gazed at it, the fact once more was impressed upon me that I had seen the moon setting in the west less than four hours previously. I was mystified by this astounding prank of nature. Giv-

ing Rose the bridle, I turned and riveted my eyes on the moon, expecting something to happen, though I had not the remotest idea what it would be.

The faithful Rose reached Spring Creek, paused to drink her fill of the pure, sparkling water, and then leisurely resumed her journey homeward, my eyes still glued to the moon. When about a furlong past the creek, I was taken aback to see what I had assumed to be the moon burst through the narrow strip of cloud behind which it had been hiding for at least four hours, and assume the aspects of a large torch, or ball of fire, something like an overgrown star, and come slowly in my direction. At this, I brought Rose to a stop, for fear of missing some move which it might make.

Onward it came, slowly and steadily, but in a line as directly toward me as if it had been an arrow shot from a bow. I knew that the distance to the horizon cloud from behind which that light had appeared must have been several miles. For all this and despite the fact that it seemed to move very slowly, it seemed to be within about a mile of me in a very short time. Seeing that it continued to come directly toward me, I dismounted from Rose and, taking her bridle close to the bit, held her head in the opposite direction. I did this because, gentle as she was, I feared she would become nervous and unmanageable

at such an unusual sight.

Finally the light, without having swerved either to the right or to the left, came to within about three yards of me and stopped—a veritable star plucked from the heavens, with great spangles of dazzling light shooting from every part. It was only about three feet from the ground, and remained motionless in that position for about ten seconds, as if held by an invisible hand. Then it slowly retraced the identical route which it had come, until it finally disappeared behind the same cloud, and again assumed the identical appearance of the rising moon. It remained there for less than ten minutes, when it once more came from behind the cloud, exactly as it did before, and again started in my direction. When about half of the distance had been traversed, however, it changed its course abruptly to a southerly direction, at right angles to me, and slowly mounted higher and higher, at an angle of perhaps 50 degrees, until it finally took a place high among the stars.

I stood watching what now appeared to be an ordinary star, though it was larger, brighter and more intensely red than any other star in the heavens, to see what its next move would be. To my amazement, it beamed steadily and never moved again. Finally I mounted Rose again and rode slowly and thoughtfully homeward, though I kept my eyes riveted on

that star. Upon reaching home, I sat on Rose for perhaps 30 minutes, still gazing at it. Finally, I stabled the mare and once more directed my vision toward that star, actually expecting it to come back to me with some definite message. But it continued to twinkle with as little concern as any other star in the firmament.

"It's a token, and for no one but me," I told myself. "Else, why did it remain behind that cloud during our trip from the party, and wait until Joe, and doubtless every one else in the county, had gone to bed, and then come as directly to me as if shot from a rifle? Of all the directions it could have taken, why did it come straight toward me? Of all the distances it could have traveled, why did it stop only when it got to within almost touching distance of me? These happenings represented more than mere coincident; more than the wildest freaks of chance or nature.

While I have always believed that demonstration to have been supernatural, yet absolutely material in substance (Joe Fletcher told me later that he too had seen the moon rising when we left the Harris residence, and thought it untimely, but soon forgot it), it was not until recent years that I began to associate it with any definite, but utterly incomprehensible entity. Of course this conclusion is wholly conjectural. However, we are hearing more and

more about celestial demonstrations of one sort or another which defy all explanations available to man. The steadily increasing number of such authenticated happenings suggests that my own experience should find an ungrudging place in the annals of the unexplainable.

The Miracle of Fatima, in 1917, was perhaps the most awesome and widely convincing supernatural demonstration of modern times. After 13 years of ecclesiastical investigation, the Catholic Church, in 1930, accepted that miracle as authentic. The following are extracts from a long and sympathetic article on *The Miracle of Fatima* in the November, 1951 issue of **THE CORONET**:

" . . . On October 13th, with a miracle promised, a crowd of 70,000 people from many miles about gathered at the Cova da Iria. The children (the ten-year-old Portuguese shepherd girl and her two playmates to whom the miracle was being revealed) stayed near the tree, and at noon Lucy again cried out: 'She is coming!' Those who stood near saw the children staring at the top of the little tree, transfigured.

"From Lucy's piping words, one could guess that she was hearing the lady urging the people of the world to mend their lives and cease offending the Lord. The vision identified itself as 'The Lady of the Rosary.' Then the children seemed to follow the flight of some-

thing towards the sun, which had broken through showering clouds.

"At that moment, according to hundreds of recorded witnesses, including doctors, journalists, and businessmen, the sun grew easy to look at, though there were no clouds. Rays of multicolored light shot out in all directions. Then the sun spun on its axis three times, and seemed to lurch and fall toward the earth, while the crowd screamed in terror. In a moment it paused, staggered back to its place, and assumed its normal brilliance "

As in the case of this Fatima Miracle, most supernatural demonstrations seem to include solemn psychic warnings or admonitions, those of Fatima embracing the whole world. However, nothing excites greater awe and speculation in me than developments in connection with so-called flying saucers. Not so long ago it was widely regarded as stupid and superstitious to take the slightest stock in these contraptions. Even the federal government, once supremely skeptical and indifferent, now confesses not only to being completely baffled but deeply concerned about them. Some time ago, in an article in *Look* magazine, Robert Moskine gave some startling information in this connection. He revealed that some of the highest federal authorities are convinced that many of those objects are from outer space.

" . . . Flying saucers could be

interplanetary spaceships or missiles," this writer states. "Air Force intelligence men say they are continually astounded by the number of trained scientists who believe they are interplanetary in origin. Lieutenant Ruppelt says he has talked with hundreds of scientists and heard many such theories. He added, 'We can deal with these things if they are from Russia. If they are from Mars, I don't know what we will do. We have no proof that they could not come from outer space and must include this among our possibilities . . .'

"Colonel Ruppelt sums up, 'The only conclusion we have come to so far is that 'flying saucers' are not an immediate and direct threat to the U. S. They have been around for five years and haven't struck yet. But that doesn't mean they are not a potential threat.' "

In an article, **HAVE WE VISITORS FROM MARS?**, quoted from *Life* by the July, 1952, *Reader's Digest*, the authors say:

" . . . Dr. Walter Reidel, once chief engineer and research director of the German rocket center in Peenemunde and now engaged in secret work for the United States, is convinced that the saucers have an out-of-the-world basis. Dr. Reidel points out that 'the skin friction of the missile at those speeds at those altitudes would melt any metals or nonmetals [sic] available.'

"Dr. Maurice A. Biot, leading

aerodynamicist, says the saucer shape makes very little sense if the machine is to travel in the atmosphere. A disk has a high drag and 'wobbles' when whirled at high speed through the air. However, for space travel, where there is no atmosphere to oppose, the disk has significant advantage. 'The least improbably explanation is that these things are artificial and controlled,' Dr. Biot concluded. 'My opinion is that they have extraterrestrial origin.'

"Why do these things make no sound? What power urges them at such terrible speeds through the sky? Who, or what, is aboard? Where do they come from? Why are they here?

"Before these awesome questions, science—and mankind—can yet only halt in wonder. Answers may come in a generation—or tomorrow."

It is thus seen that some of the highest scientific authorities are convinced that these visitors are from other worlds. Because of the astounding manner in which they nullify all known laws of physics, it logically follows that the entities involved in these visits are endowed with intelligence and power far above anything ever dreamed of by mortal man. The fact that these visits, whether ominous or propitious, seem to be increasing in frequency suggests that the visitors are becoming increasingly concerned about matters connected with this planet. It also

seems significant that most of these visits are reported over the United States. Indeed, it almost seems that they increase in inverse ratio to America's involvement in international affairs.

Just how intelligent those visitors may be is of course wholly conjectural. However, they are perhaps more spiritual than physical in personality. In that case, while manifestly being far below the highest order of intelligence, they may well be able to read mortal minds, sense earth conditions and influence earthly events in a manner utterly foreign to our so-called intelligence. If this is true, it may well be that their mounting visits to earth (it is inconceivable that they are without purpose) presages some extremely momentous development, for good or ill.

The American people would merely be rocking in the cradle of carnal security to assume that their conduct has been so circumspect that they merit nothing but pats on the back by stern and super-intelligent visitors from space. Do they find that our frantic efforts for superiority in human destructives, rather than doing our utmost to produce something far better and more constructive, is the sanest method for meeting the challenge of communism? Sophocles has warned that "Whom Jupiter would destroy he first drives mad." Instead of upholding our efforts to impose peace (?) upon the world by force of arms, these

wise visitors from outer space may be much more concerned about our making our influence felt less by precept and more by example at home and abroad. Let us not jump too hastily at the conclusion that such possible evaluations of our conduct by beings vastly superior to us from every conceivable angle will not in some way shape our destiny for possible ages to come.

At this juncture readers may well be wondering what all this can possibly have to do with the moon-torch-star demonstrations to which I have attached so much importance. That it is not too much to believe that it has a great deal to do with it will soon be made apparent. As already stated, although I at first had not the faintest conception of what it was to be, my whole life since that time has been geared to a firm conviction that it was a supernatural notice that I was to perform some matchless service for humanity which was utterly beyond the scope of any other mortal. Such a conviction, of itself, plainly means nothing. With sufficient promptings, it might be easy to hoodwink numerous nitwits into wasting their lives upon missions which they believed that they alone could accomplish. It is something else when mystic urgings unfold to an individual plan after plan which, if put into operation, would effectuate marvelous improvements in various fields of human relations.

Does it mean nothing to the reader that, despite my isolation on that barren Kansas farm until I was 23 years of age, a strange chain of unforeseen circumstances suddenly landed me on the shores of New England on a lone wolf, itinerant lecturing tour which continued for nearly four years. My efforts were directed toward correcting a certain grave social injustice which all other Americans seemed languidly to accept as a matter of course.

During this itinerary I established and tried to make universal an organized movement for correcting that injustice. Not only were my efforts highly lauded by high and more humble alike, but I soon became a recognized authority on that particular phase of human relations. My insurmountable handicap was that I was wholly without backing of any kind, and was forced to depend upon the amazingly grudging voluntary contributions at my lectures. Instead of making any material headway, this situation forced me to go many a day without a morsel of food, and to spend night after night in friendly forests.

I was forced to end this lecturing tour in Philadelphia, and it has ever since been my home. It was here that an inability to procure any adequate speaking engagements, thus making it impossible for me to eke out such a miserable existence as I had done else-

where, caused me to resort to writing for advancing a cause which was dearer to me than life itself. It was extremely rare that my writings found favor with the publicity powers that were.

I soon learned, however, that my efforts had attracted more widespread and favorable attention than I had anticipated. I had been in Philadelphia for perhaps less than two years (being still well under 30) when I received almost simultaneously very similar letters from Dr. Carl Kelsey, then professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, and from the professor of sociology at Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa, whose letter I have lost and whose name I forget. Both men wrote me that they represented a group of colleges and universities which had decided to do something about the problem which I had been so widely discussing. They asked me for certain specific facts and data upon which to base their studies and discussions. Because there was no material support for that movement (which would have put an early and amicable end to that situation), it has since become the subject of much senseless controversy and bitterness.

From the restricted issue thus joined in by Dr. Kelsey, the Grinnell professor and other sociologists whom neither of them named, I soon found myself grappling, in the same convincing manner, if I may be so immodest as to say so,

through the media of scores of unpublished books, pamphlets, magazine and newspaper articles, with some of America's most vexatious civil, political, economic and international problems. Only a few years ago I had published, under extremely unfortunate conditions, a comprehensive treatise on, and specific remedies for two such problems. The very next issue of *The American Sociological Review* carried a full page and highly laudatory review of that book. It specifically declared that my remedies for the two problems discussed were far more logical than anything ever written on them by the most outstanding authorities.

Soon after this I published, again at my own expense, a specific and detailed remedy for the problem of unemployment, which once more threatened to engulf America. The International Mark Twain Society, of which I had never before heard, promptly made me an honorary member because of that brochure. Some idea of what that honor actually meant is suggested by the fact that, although this is a world-wide organization, it then listed only 46 honorary members. Cyril Clemens (closely related to Mark Twain) is the president, Thomas E. Dewey is its New York representative, and the now Sir Winston Churchill is its British representative. My membership card bears the signatures of Cyril Clemens and Winston Churchill, and serves as an introduction

to any ruler or potentate in the world.

In 1939 I wrote a comprehensive book, **WHY HARASS JAPAN?** Its desperate purpose was to rivet public attention to the fact that needling Japan over issues about which we knew virtually nothing, could lead to nothing but a baseless and devastating war. Had the facts and admonitions contained in that book—in just that one little book—been ungrudgingly brought to public attention, the war with Japan would have been utterly unthinkable.

Every publisher to whom the book was sent made either brief or rather extended comments about it. Not one of them spoke disparagingly. Some lauded it rather highly. One of the most outstanding publishers finally wrote me that the book was "tremendously interesting and highly important," but he feared that the war of which I warned would come before they could get the book on sale. That was in March, 1941. The war came less than a year later. The amazing thing is that not one of the many publishers contacted had the foresight to issue that book and thus stave off the calamitous and complicating war which ensued.

The last book which I succeeded in having published is, perhaps, more important than all the others. It is entitled *The Korean Mess And Some Correctives*. It covers vastly more ground than the title suggests. First of all, it warned of

the unspeakable calamities which would ensue if that appalling Korean blunder was not nipped in the bud. Among other issues of vital importance, it also reveals the only conceivable methods by which that mess can be settled in consonance with justice, reason and any hope for sustained peace or western welcome in Asia.

It unfolds a simple and detailed plan for so regulating working hours and raising and equalizing wages as to provide steady employment, at decent pay, for every citizen who is willing and able to work. On its very face, this plan would leave communism nothing on which to thrive, and would refute the contention that war with Russia is the only means of preventing the spread of that economic nostrum.

The book's remedy for the interminable tug-of-war between labor and management (the cost of which is consistently passed on to the public) would mean far better and more equitable conditions for workers, with no onerous terms for management, than any labor union ever dreamed of.

These are but few of the many positive remedies for various social maladies which I have reduced to writing during the last several decades. There was not one of these remedies which, if applied, would not have brought about notable improvements in specified fields of human relations. Some of them, such as concerned our entangle-

ments in connection with Japan and Korea, would have saved us billions of dollars, rivers of blood, and a baseless psychosis that war with Russia is unavoidable.

No mortal can grasp the unspeakable anguish I suffered when, year after year, and decade after decade, I saw these self-evident formulae for increasing human hope and happiness consistently spurned by the publicity powers that be. Whatever may be said about that moon-torch-star demonstration, it was that alone which gave me strength and courage for the unrewarded years of toil, rebuffs, privations and sufferings which dogged my efforts to execute what I passionately believed to be divine commands.

“The fact that I am now quickening my pace toward what Nature seems to have designated as life's sunset, without the consummation of a solitary purpose for which I have long been sweating blood, poses this question: Is it not more than likely that I attached entirely too much importance to the celestial demonstrations which have so completely dominated my life? At least one thing gives me pause. Whether that moon-torch-star demonstration was natural or supernatural, is there no significance in the fact that it was I alone, the plain objective of that demonstration, who soon demonstrated an astounding faculty for more quickly and more completely grasping vexatious problems of human re-

lations than any other known mortal of modern times? Does it seem likely that a plodding farmer lad, plus these manifestations, plus an uncanny insight to plaguing problems of human relations, add up to nothing but petty pranks of chance? If, as I passionately believe, this whole drama was staged by some supernatural intelligence, is it reasonable to believe that no earthly climax was ever so much as contemplated? To me, it seems incomprehensible that there is in the economy of the Cosmos any provisions for endowing any mortal with such gifts as these, and a superhuman urge to apply them, only to have the whole plot fade into nothingness as the curtain falls.

However legendary it may be, the Bible tells us that God Himself repented that He ever made man. Is it unthinkable that the Intelligence which staged that moon-torch-star demonstration for me, has closely observed every development in that connection from that day to this? Is it unthinkable that at least some of these spaceship visitors are emissaries from that same Intelligence, whose mission it is to adjudicate America's reactions to the mission thus supernaturally imposed upon me, a poor worm of the dust?

Is it unthinkable that these emissaries have somehow been commissioned to put this nation on

something like a probationary period? That they are to impress upon it, in some psychic manner, the vital importance of more completely measuring up to the demands of the world's moral leadership to which it lays claim, or take the consequence? What mortal can say what these consequences may be? American scientists are boasting of secret weapons which could almost instantly wipe out civilization. Most Americans profess to believe in a God who presides over the destiny of nations. Can they believe that such a God is pleased, among many other shortcomings, with the manner in which they are thus prostituting their talents by scheming to destroy, instead of cherishing and preserving what it pleased Him to create

It would be an absurdly simple matter to bring about, right here in America, such elysian social, civil and economic conditions that none but mad men would want to supplant them with any other ideology on earth. If we persist in hugging the delusions of war, in preference to such heaven-on-earth conditions, is it unthinkable that some of those space visitors have, somehow, been commissioned to thought-wave us into using our self-chosen methods for taking our self-selected place "with all the nations that forget God?"



MISTRESS of the KAMA-LOKA

By

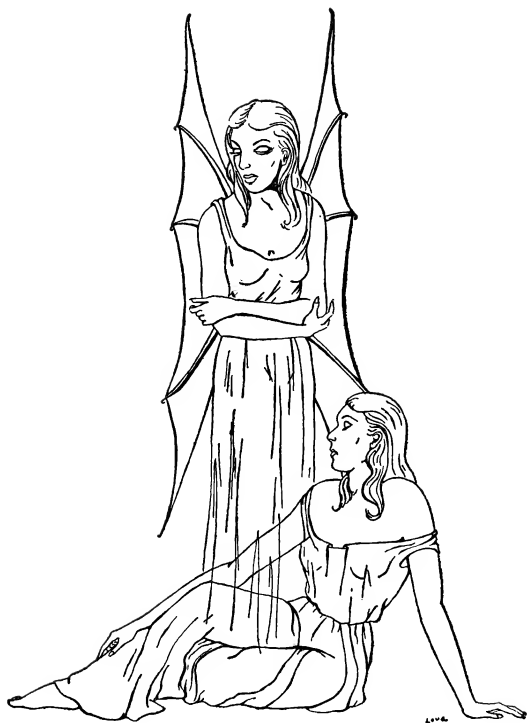
Peter Worth

This is an important story. Important because it reveals a strange thing that not only can go on in this world of ours, but most likely is going on though we are not aware of it in the full light of day. There are those who feel that events in the world are being shaped by evil influences, and that there is a menace from the psychic realms perhaps far more dangerous than from the physical. The Kama-loka is a place, astral in nature, where the Kama-rupa exists; being a shell of the material body somewhat like it in atomic structure, but intermediary between the physical and spiritual existence. It is a sort of "ghost" structure which lives on after the death of the physical body, and by the love (or hate) of those it leaves behind, can remain and become a powerful and dangerous force for evil. In its unnatural existence, it partakes of the nature of a vampire, living off the life-forces of the physical, and robbing physical beings of vital energy. Worse still is the vehicle they become for the transference to our plane of mental commands many of us are weak enough to obey. How many times have you encountered a Kama-rupa and not known it?

Illustrated by Joe Love

THE woman parked her station wagon at the curb and bustled out, her shopping list clutched determinedly. Her daughter, twelve, and son, nine, leaped out the other side of the car with whoops of attacking Indians. The woman started across the street to begin her shopping—then paused in surprise. Her startled eyes studied the small shop next to the drugstore. It was a jewelry store, and not a preten-

tious one. The faded sign above the show window said simply, **WATCHMAKER**. The window was dusty, the display inside equally dusty, with a few pieces of hollow ware obviously new but also quite obviously tarnished from long exposure. Slowly she approached the window and looked in. There was a clean circle where some piece had been recently removed, exposing the dust free area where it had sat.



She looked beyond the display to the low railing designed to keep customers from reaching the window display. Beyond the railing was a profile of a bent head and view of a watch repairman working at this trade, magnifying glass cupped over his eye. At his back was a board upon which hung dozens of wristwatches and several pocket watches.

Her attention returned to the watchmaker. His hair, combed straight back, was glossy black. His forehead was white and smooth and receded into a scalp-line that was deeply V'd.

She blinked her eyes and looked aside uncertainly, at the drugstore to the right of her, then to the supermarket to the left. She looked again at the watchmaker's. The man inside was a stranger. But that was to be expected—because the watchmaker's shop had not been here at all yesterday.

Yesterday the drugstore and the supermarket had been next to each other—their walls touching. Now—it was as though some hand had pushed them apart far enough to slip this old shop in between them.

In sudden decision, she returned to the station wagon on the pretense she had forgotten something. When she turned around again she studied the drugstore and supermarket. They seemed slightly narrower, as if *squeezed* to accommodate the watchmaker shop.

She lifted her shopping list and looked at it. There, the last item

on the list, was, "Get watch." Of course!

She shook her head dazedly. What kind of a trick had her mind been playing on her? Imagine, thinking the watchmaker's hadn't been there yesterday, when she had left her watch there last week to be fixed!

She crossed the street again and marched into the shop. "Is my watch ready yet, Mr. Altschuler?" she said. "I really miss it so" And as the watchmaker turned to search the board for it she thought, "Imagine!" She jerked back to her surroundings with a mental loss of bearings. Mr. Altschuler was taking off her wristwatch. "I forgot to wind it," he explained.

Of course! He had taken it from the rack and put it on her wrist. Now he was taking it off again to wind it. What was the matter with her? She remembered suddenly that she had kept looking at her watch all the way in from the farm—or had she? Suddenly she wasn't sure. And of course she couldn't have, because her watch had been here all the time being repaired.

Mr. Altschuler had opened the back of the case and was doing something to the insides with incredibly small instruments. "Hmmm" he said. "I'm glad I decided to check inside again. This will only take a minute."

She watched him. He opened a drawer in his workbench and took a very small metal object from a

box that contained what seemed to be hundreds. With fine tweezers he inserted it somewhere in the fine gear wheels. He put the works back in the case and snapped it shut. He put the watch back on her wrist.

"How much is it?" she asked.

Mr. Altshuler looked down at the counter. There were two cards there, one with a string on it and the other with a perforated edge. On both were written \$2.75 in pencil.

"I remember now," she said. She paid the bill and hurried out to begin her shopping at the supermarket. She had to chuckle. It had been the funniest feeling.

As she entered the supermarket another woman paused in front of the watchmaker's, then went in. When she came out and went into the drugstore a man paused before the watchmaker's window, frowning as though he was trying to remember something . . .

"**H**I, Sonia."

The auburn haired girl glanced up from her typewriter, her frown of concentration replaced abruptly by animated friendliness. "Hi yourself, Carl," she said. "How's the writing business going?"

"So so," Carl Vance shrugged. "Just raked in fifty thousand bucks from movie sale of a best seller of mine under a pen name you never heard of." He polished his fingernails carefully on his coat

lapel. "Been shopping around today for a new car. It's a toss-up between a Cadillac and a New Yorker right now—depending on which will give me the color scheme I want. By the way, could you loan me ten until the bank opens tomorrow so I can cash my check?"

"Why sure, Carl," Sonia said, reaching for her purse. The next instant she had discovered the twinkle in his eye. "You dog!" she gasped. "Sometime you'll need money, and I'll think you're joking."

"I do need it," Carl said, "if I invite you to have dinner with me tonight."

"Sorry, Carl."

"Your husband again?" Carl groaned.

"Uh huh," Sonia said. It was a standard joke between them, and she didn't have a husband. She liked Carl tremendously, but there was a tacit understanding between them that dating would lead to emotional complications neither of them wanted.

Carl sighed deeply. "Is his lordship in?" he said. "I have something that might intrigue him. It did me."

"I'll see," Sonia said. "What is it?"

"A new deal in Christmas cards. You buy a set of twenty-four for only ninety-eight cents, and you get a new steam iron, a rebuilt vacuum cleaner, and a thirty-inch tv set without additional pay-

ment."

"No kidding?" Sonia said, her hand arrested just before the intercom switch to the inner office. "How do they do it?"

"Well, you see," Carl said, "in order to become eligible for the special offer on Christmas cards you have to buy a new Cadillac—"

"I get it," Sonia said. "You want to talk Craig into buying a Cadillac so you can borrow it. Okay, and if you manage it, I'll let you take me riding in the country." She pushed the switch. "A salesman from the Cadillac people is here to see you about your new car, Mr. Barnes," she said sweetly.

"Okay," the loudspeaker said. "Tell Carl to bring the letter in."

"How did he know?" Carl said.

"Have you ever come up without something from your fan mail?" Sonia murmured. She followed Carl through the door marked PRIVATE.

Craig Barnes did not give the impression of being impressive, even when he stood up to his full six feet four inches of broadshouldered height. He merely made the office seem small. This was a quality that Carl Vance had never quite gotten used to. It carried over into Craig Barnes' personality. You found yourself listening to his every word, wanting to do what he suggested, wanting to find some way of doing him a favor. If you wanted to be his friend.

His enemies? They had a habit of underestimating him far too

much. He often complained of this, claiming it didn't give him a chance to feel he came out on top by ability, but rather by lack of common sense on the part of his enemies. And he would add sadly, "There's a difference, you know."

Craig Barnes shook hands with Carl Vance, eyeing the letter protruding from Carl's pocket. Carl grinned and said, "Okay, horsey, here's your lump of sugar." He handed the letter to Craig, adding, "Of course, it's really nothing. I'd use it to write a story if I could think of some way to handle it. It might come to me eventually. Some woman that suffered quite a common type of delusion. She saw a building that had always been where it was, and had a peculiar feeling that it hadn't been there the day before. It's " His voice drifted into silence as he realized Craig wasn't listening. His bright blue eyes were jumping from phrase to phrase of the letter.

"A Mrs. Theona Croop," he said when he finished the letter. "In Mansfield, Montana." He went to a bookshelf and took down an Atlas. In a moment he had all the information it could give. Mansfield was in north central Montana, population eight hundred and fifty, a cattle and copper mine locality, elevation forty-three hundred feet, reached by a dead-end highway and a spur track of the Great Northern Railway. He glanced over the letter again in-

differently. "Interesting," he conceded, "but as you say, quite common. Let me know if she writes you again, Carl. How about having lunch with me and Sonia?"

"Why not?" Carl said lightly, grinning at Sonia. "That's really what I came over for. The letter was just an excuse."

"Wait in the outer office with Sonia for a minute or two," Craig said. "Got a couple of things to take care of. Only take a minute."

He still held the letter from Theona Croop in his hand. When Carl and Sonia closed the door, Craig went to his desk and sat down. He stared at the letter, frowning in concentration. Finally he laid it flat on the desk and placed his fingertips on it, closing his eyes.

Images built up in his mind's eye. A farm surrounded by rolling hill country, an enormous hay barn, a small but well-built house, and finally the face of a woman. He was certain it must be Theona Croop. There were two children, a boy and a girl. A husband, Theodore, who had few thoughts outside the business of his farm.

Craig's forehead became dotted with perspiration from the intensity of his concentration. He knew he had gained contact with Theona. Now he was trying, through that contact, to see the watchmaker's shop.

He felt Theona consciously become aware of his contact and its purpose, and try to help him. Bit by bit he made more positive the

contact between them.

Abruptly he felt a searing pain flash into his mind. He sensed it shortcircuiting neural paths. His body jerked convulsively as though in contact with a high voltage power line.

He found himself sprawled on the floor, his chair tipped over. In his mind, echoing and re-echoing, was the memory of a woman's voice, agonized, repeating over and over, "My watch! My watch! My watch!"

Carl Vance and Sonia Mills came bursting through the door. Sonia rushed to Craig with a low moan. "Oh, my darling, are you all right?"

Carl stared closely at Craig and saw he was all right. "Uh huh!" he said. "Now I see why I can't get anywhere with Sonia. She's in love with her boss."

"I am not!" Sonia flared. "He's hurt!"

"I'm not hurt," Craig said, getting to his feet, "but maybe Theona is." He looked dourly at the letter on his desk. "Some terrible power."

Carl Vance stared at the letter. He guessed what Craig had tried to do. He had himself experimented with telepathic contact by means of a letter from a person, but with no success.

"Sonia," Craig said in sudden decision, "get me a reservation on the first plane for Billings, Montana. I'm going out there and see what's going on."

"Make it two reservations," Carl said. "I'm going along."

"I'll make it three," Sonia said.

"Neither of you are going," Craig said with great firmness. "It's too dangerous this time."

Carl and Sonia exchanged a secret smile

CRAIG BARNES was the son of a female mystic. His mother had had great ability as a medium, fortune teller, and mind reader. His father had been a famous nuclear physicist.

Other mystics dreamed dreams of the day when the realm of the supernatural would become integrated into legitimate scientific study. Craig's mother Olga had dreamed of a son who would combine her psychic powers with the intellect of a true scientist. When that son had been born she had dedicated her life to developing to the fullest extent all the latent extrasensory powers with which she was firmly convinced all humans are born, though in varying degree.

At the same time she encouraged the attempts of her scientist husband to interest Craig in purely scientific studies. The results were all Olga had hoped for. By the time Craig reached college he had equalled his mother in psychic development and in many ways had surpassed her. He might have turned his back on science, but Olga had carefully instilled within him her dream of wedding sci-

ence and the occult. That dream caused him to throw himself into scientific study with equal zeal, with the result that by the time he obtained his Ph.D. in physics he was already a recognized physicist.

His father died during his last year in college. His mother died when he was twenty-five. He had had no contact with his father after his death. His mother remained only long enough to assure him she was all right. She returned two weeks later to let him know she had located his father in a school. After that Craig was entirely alone.

His great dream was to discover or invent some bridge between the astral and the material that would be independent of the human mind. The more he delved into the subject, the more impossible it seemed. But Craig was convinced that such a bridge must exist. He dedicated his life to finding it.

There were three avenues of study. First, he might discover it himself through research. Consequently he continued his scientific studies, gaining a reputation as an independent nuclear research scientist. Ostensibly that was the sole function of his office.

Second, there was the possibility that someone else might beat him to the discovery. So he kept abreast of the mystic field, and in fairly close contact with writers in that field such as Carl Vance.

If even a whisper of such a discovery were made, he would be one of the first to hear of it.

Third, some natural or supernatural phenomenon might be uncovered that would point toward the principle that would underlie such a bridge with the supernatural. This aspect of his search led him to investigate every unusual occurrence. Most valuable in this line were the writers like Carl, who received many letters from people on unusual occurrences. In return for these leads, he made reports to those writers which they could use in their writings.

Most of such leads led to little, or nothing. Some showed great promise and dwindled into nothing but the imagination of the writers of the letters. Some developed into genuine supernatural occurrences, but so far none had pointed toward a concrete bridge to connect the occult to the physical sciences.

None had shown the promise of this letter from Theona, nor had any begun with such display of danger. Power that had bridged a distance of two thousand miles nearly to destroy Craig.

He entertained no doubt of the intention of the wielder of that power. Fear greater than the human mind can bear had bit into him for a fraction of a second. Concentrated psychic power had seared into him with all the hate and inhumanity of satan himself. And it had been directed *through*

Theona Croop—or *her watch*.

On the plane as it spanned the distance from Chicago to Billings he puzzled over the various aspects of the problem. Always his thoughts came back to one question: why had this thing begun in Mansfield, Montana? Because it was off the travelled path and therefore less likely to be discovered or interfered with? Was it connected in any way with the many reports of flying saucers over Montana, or the detailed though unverified reports of huge globular spaceships landing in northern Montana?

There was another possibility that Craig had entertained from the first moment he read about Mansfield in the atlas. Mansfield was a mining center. That meant that tunnels were being constantly extended this way and that, deep underground. Had one of these mining tunnels broken through to something underground?

It was a possibility that disturbed him. To encounter something new and as yet not powerful enough to defy control was one thing. To plunge into the midst of something already too powerful for the science of man to cope with would be entirely different. It was for that reason he wanted to investigate alone, but he had been overruled. However, he kept these thoughts to himself.

“**W**HERE’S Billings?” Carl Vance asked as the plane

circled in for a landing. Craig and Sonia smiled. The landing field did seem to be alone in a mountain wilderness.

They and two others were the only passengers in the airport bus. It encountered little traffic on its way to town. Eventually it pulled up in front of a brick front with a modest sign announcing the Northern Hotel. Inside was a small lobby packed with overstuffed chairs, each occupied by someone who obviously intended to remain where he was indefinitely.

The clerk, thin-chested and presumptive, eyed them suspiciously. "Miss Mills is my secretary," Craig explained. "By the way, where can I rent a car for a week or so?"

"Why, uh" the clerk hesitated.

A man rose from a nearby chair. "You want to rent a car, mister?" he said. "I've got one I ain't using right now. You can have it for fifty bucks. That too much?"

"That's what I expected to pay," Craig said.

"It's a Ford, kind of beat up, but with a good engine. It'll get you there. Come on outside and I'll show it to you. My name's George Purdy."

"Fine, George," Craig said. "Sonia, you go upstairs. Carl and I will meet you in half an hour. We'll eat, and then we can use the car to look over the town." He turned again to the man named Purdy. "All right, George, let's see the car."

George Purdy led the way, with Craig and Carl on either side. They went down a side street from the hotel. The Ford, a 1948 sedan, was parked at the curb. "Here's the keys," he said, fishing them out of the pocket of his jacket.

"Fine," Craig said. "I suppose you want the week's rental now." He took a thick billfold from his pocket and took out two twenties and a ten dollar bill and gave them to Purdy.

"Any time you want to get in touch with me," Purdy said, "I'm generally in the lobby." He stuck the money in his pocket and walked back toward the hotel. Craig stood watching him depart.

"What's the matter?" Carl Vance said. "Something wrong?"

"I don't know," Craig said. "It seems impossible. No one knew we were coming. I doubt that anyone here ever heard of us, and certainly they wouldn't know what we look like."

"Then what's eating you?" Carl demanded.

"Nothing," Craig said, "except that Purdy was too convenient. Look, Carl. That jolt I got in the office was deliberate on the part of someone very dangerous—someone able nearly to kill me over a distance of two thousand miles as soon as he sensed my contact with Mrs. Croop. Would it be too much for him to reason that I might catch an early plane for the nearest airport city, and check into the hotel the airport bus goes to?"

"You think Purdy is—"

"The big shot? No. I could be mistaken, but—no."

Carl Vance frowned. "You think they might have a bomb in this Ford?"

"I think we should take every precaution," Craig said. "Purdy's just handing us the keys and walking away before we could get into the car might mean a bomb."

Craig peered through the windows. Seeing no wires connected to the doors, he inserted the key and unlocked the door on the driver's side. Nothing happened.

He looked down the street, his eyes settling on the sign of a hardware store. "Wait here, Carl," he said. Five minutes later he returned with a ball of heavy twine. He tied one end around the hood-release handle under the dashboard and played out the ball until he was ten feet away from the car. "Get across the street, Carl," he cautioned.

When Carl reached the opposite sidewalk, Craig pulled firmly on the string. They saw the hood pop up an inch. Craig waited another minute, then approached the car, winding the string back on the ball.

Next he stooped down and studied as much as he could see of the catch under the hood. "I think it's safe to lift the hood," he said. He reached in and pushed back the catch. The hood went up.

Carl came from across the street. He watched Craig explor-

ing the motor. Finally Craig grunted, "Nothing under here. One other place, under the dashboard." He left the hood up and went around to the side and started to get into the car.

"Wait a minute," Carl said. "It might be possible to rig some pressure contact in the cushion so when you sit down . . ."

Craig straightened up slowly. "You may have it," he said. "Get on the other side and we'll lift the seat."

Together, very cautiously, they coaxed the seat cushion up, and slid it forward to look under it.

"Uh huh!" Carl exclaimed.

There were bright colored wires dangling from the underside of the cushion and leading to a small metal box. Carl reached in to yank at one of the wires.

"Don't touch it!" Craig warned. "The trigger mechanism may be the break kind instead of make. Disconnecting a wire would set it off if that's the case."

Inch by inch they tilted the seat until they could see the triggering mechanism. While Carl held the seat cushion steady, Craig carefully worked the mechanism free.

"What'll we do with it?" Carl asked.

Craig didn't reply. He was studying the contact switch. Finally he unhooked the wires. "That should make it harmless," he said. "Just the same"

He found a screwdriver in the glove compartment, and carefully

dismantled the box. Finally he held three sticks of dynamite in his hand.

"They meant business," Carl said. "What do we do now? I'd suggest we get some other car. It's a cinch we'll never see George Purdy again."

Craig grinned. "First, let's take this car to a garage and have them go over every square inch of it. Maybe they'll find more stuff. It's possible they figured we might find the bomb, and planted other things."

Carl glanced at his wristwatch. "The half hour's up," he said. "Sonia will be down in the lobby waiting for us."

"I'd forgotten about Sonia!" Craig said. "Come on!" He broke into a fast trot back to the hotel. Sonia wasn't in the lobby. Craig barked at the clerk, "Get Miss Mills' room on the phone for me."

The clerk shook his head. "She went out," he said. "The gentleman who rented you the car came in a few minutes after you left with him and told her over the phone to come right down, that you wanted her to come out to the car. She came right down and went out with him."

"Do you know that man?" Craig said. "Does he live here in the hotel?"

The clerk shook his head. "I never saw him before this morning. He came in about nine this morning and sat down as though he were waiting for someone. I

noticed that he studied the passengers from the airport bus every time it came here. I guessed he was expecting someone but wasn't sure what the person looked like."

Craig and Carl ran out into the street, knowing as they did that it was too late. George Purdy had almost half an hour to get away with Sonia. On the sidewalk Carl groaned, "We don't know what kind of a car he used, or where he went. How will we ever find her?"

"Let's hope that Ford can go fast," Craig said. "Our only hope is to catch up with them. They won't kill her here in Billings. They will take her to Mansfield or near there." They ran the block to the car.

"What'll we do with this dynamite?" Carl said as they climbed in.

"Put it in the back seat, Carl. We may find a use for it. And we'll just have to take the chance there's nothing else wrong with this car. Every second counts."

Craig jammed on the starter button. The motor roared to life. He shot away from the curb, broke the speed limit going through town. He almost overshot the turn-off toward Mansfield, but made it on two wheels. Seconds later they were in open country, the speedometer hovering around eighty.

"We have one chance," Craig said. "Purdy may have realized we didn't fall for the bomb trap.

If he knows we aren't dead he may keep Sonia alive as a hostage."

They passed several cars. Craig glanced at each, but didn't slow down.

"How are we going to know if we pass a car that has Sonia in it?" Carl Vance asked.

"We can only hope we do," Craig Barnes said. "The cars we just passed left Billings only a couple of minutes ago. If they have Sonia in a car and are taking her to Mansfield or near it, they would have started at least fifteen minutes before we did, and gone fairly fast. That means we will probably be more than half way there before we catch up with them. And George Purdy, besides being easy to spot if he's the driver of that car, would recognize this car and perhaps do something to give himself away. We have the psychological advantage."

"I hope they haven't killed her," Carl said, his agony of anxiety showing on his face.

"The instant they do I'll know," Craig said harshly, "and God help them—"

Carl looked sharply at Craig as Craig's voice broke, and looked away again, embarrassed at seeing such raw emotion on a face that was ordinarily reserved and friendly.

They were silent as the car hurtled on, eating up the miles. Suddenly Craig braked the car almost to a stop and turned off

the highway into one of the many side roads. He drove in until the highway could no longer be seen.

"Stay where you are," he grunted, opening the door and getting out.

Carl saw him run back toward the road. A few minutes later he came back and got behind the wheel. "They'll think we're ahead now," he grunted as he turned the car and went back to the highway. As the car turned onto the pavement and picked up speed he explained. "I saw a car off on a side road. I thought it might be them. I guessed their strategy. Wait until I whiz by, then follow me. But now I know the car. It's a fifty two Buick. I touched Sonia's mind for an instant. They don't intend to kill her. They're going to take her to their headquarters."

"Then we'll follow them there?" Carl asked.

"We'll try to. I didn't dare contact her longer than an instant. We're onto something so dangerous that—Frankly, Carl, we may not come out of this alive. We're dealing with the *kama-loka*. Everything points to it. And I don't see how it's possible, unless there is something behind it so terrible that I am afraid."

"The *kama-loka*?" Carl said. "But isn't that the realm of astral shells and thought forms, semi-material, but lacking in intelligence?"

"It's the missing link," Craig said. "I've thought it must be, but

I couldn't see why. The *kama-rupa* or astral shell that lives on for a while after death, then dissipates. Why is it necessary? Is it because pure spirit can't govern the physical *except through a type of basic substance intermediary to physical and spiritual*? I've missed that angle in my research. Someone else—or some thing—has found that key. It scares me."

He became silent. Carl stared ahead, trying to digest what Craig had said. The miles passed swiftly. From time to time they saw the tail of the fifty-two Buick ahead. It was going at a steady eighty-five miles an hour—all the highway would permit. The Ford gained on it on straightaways and fell back on curves where it had to slow down more because it was a lighter car.

"Tell me more of what you think on this kama-loka business," Carl said finally. "Why did you pick that term in particular? It's Sanskrit. I've always considered it synonymous with the astral."

"In a way you might say the astral is included in the kama-loka," Craig explained. "The kama-loka could also be called a plane of reality, just as the material universe is a plane of reality. They are both real in the physical sense. Atoms as we know them interact by means of their fields and emanations, which have interlocking action. That is the basis of chemistry. One part of the field of one atom is shaped so it can fit into a

part of the field of another atom. That forms chemical union."

Craig shot the car off the road and along the bank to get past slower moving cars going on both directions, then skidded back on to the highway without having slowed down.

"The way I picture the kama-loka," he went on calmly, "is as a field of similar atomic units, but much smaller. I think mesons are the atoms of this finer reality. They can synthesize with other mesons, but not with atoms, and vice versa. But when they are built up into large structures, they can act upon large structures of the atoms we know *by means of their total field structure*."

"Such a structure is the astral body of the living person. How it builds up I don't know yet, but I think the soul has something to do with it. The soul is on still a different plane of reality, and I don't have the slightest inkling as to its basic nature, though I have plenty of theories. One thing seems that the soul can form shapes made of mesons and make them so solid that they pass for ordinary matter. And I don't believe the soul can operate on ordinary matter directly, but only through the meson structures, or kama-loka. Sometime maybe we can go into it in more detail."

Carl frowned as he digested this information. "How does all that fit into what we're running into?" he asked.

"I wish I knew," Craig said. "A jeweler's shop where no building can be, according to Teona's letter. Small things put into watches that make it dangerous even to contact a person from two thousand miles away without being seared by subatomic fires. It's those small things in the watches that I'm anxious to get at. I think they hold the key to this whole mystery. But getting one would probably be like getting an atom bomb without knowing how to keep it from blowing up.

"First things come first. We want to follow the car ahead and see where they take Sonia, and rescue her if we can. Then I want to investigate that watchmaker's shop."

A few seconds later they rounded a curve and saw the town of Mansfield. It was in a valley. A few hundred houses, a grain storage warehouse, railroad tracks, stock pens by the tracks. The highway wound downward off the mountain pass they had gone through.

The Buick was half a mile ahead of them, in sight part of the time. Craig had to concentrate on the road ahead. Carl watched for the Buick. Suddenly he saw it turn off the highway.

"They aren't going into town," he said to Craig. "Slow down after the next switchback. I think I can spot the road they turned off on."

There was no missing it. Tracks

of scorched rubber on the pavement marked the turn-off plainly.

"They almost passed it themselves," Carl said.

The dirt road wound among the giant pines for a few miles, then became narrower and went uphill gradually. Once they saw the Buick across a narrow valley, still going.

"I wonder if they saw us," Craig grunted. "I'm beginning to think they intended us to follow them."

"You mean a trap?" Carl said. "If it is, what do we do?"

"Walk into it," Craig said. "We didn't come here to play safe."

"Yeah. Sure," Carl said, swallowing.

Craig grinned. "Wish you were back at your typewriter, Carl?"

"Oh, no. No," Carl said airily. "Nothing I like better than to tangle with people who plant bombs in cars and kidnap women."

Craig chuckled dryly and slowed down, wary eyes surveying every square inch of the scenery as it unfolded ahead of them. It had rained a day or so before. The tracks of the Buick were visible in the soft spots.

"Here," Craig said suddenly. The tracks turned onto a narrow pair of ruts going into the woods. Craig went past the turn-off for a few yards. At a stretch where the road was dry and hard he turned into the grass and backed the Ford into the concealment of a thicket. "We'll go on from here on foot," he said. "I doubt if that

wagon trail they took goes very far."

They followed the pair of ruts well to one side, going forward slowly and with extreme caution. Sometimes they had to creep closer to the road to make sure they were still paralleling it. Then they would retreat into the protection of the silent forest. It took them half an hour to go the quarter of a mile.

Suddenly Craig put his hand on Carl's shoulder. "Look up there," he whispered.

Carl looked where Craig pointed, and saw the roof of a building through the trees. The roof went up the side of a steep hill for a hundred yards.

"That building is an ore processing plant," Craig said softly.

The two men stole cautiously to the edge of the forest. The other mine buildings could be seen across the clearing. The Buick was parked in front of one of them.

"What'll we do?" Carl whispered. "They could have look-outs in those buildings who would spot us if we showed ourselves."

Craig studied the silent mine buildings for several minutes. Suddenly he said, "This is what I think best. You stay here and watch that Buick. We can't sneak in until after dark without being spotted. I'm going on into town and investigate. I'll be back by dark. One of us has to remain here to make sure if the Buick leaves that it doesn't take Sonia. Now,

listen." Craig made a noise like a scolding squirrel. "When I come back I'll make a sound like that as I come in. That way you'll know it's I."

"Okay," Carl said. "When you come back bring some sandwiches if you think of it. I'm hungry."

CRAIG ran silently and swiftly back to the car. His eyes darted keenly around, studying the grass. There were faint signs that might be from several people approaching the car. No one was in sight, and no one was in the car as he approached silently and peered in through the windows.

He hesitated, then got in, starting the motor quickly and backing out onto the road. He was ready to drop to the floor of the car, but no shots came. He frowned uneasily. Why had they let him go when they had him? Because they didn't know where Carl was? Or were they so sure they had him that they could let him have his freedom a while longer?

He shrugged off the feeling of uneasiness. It was possible that they were as afraid of him as he was of them. After all, he had reached across two thousand miles to contact the mind of a woman he had never seen. They might be treating him with caution because of that. And to a certain extent, they might be right in dealing cautiously with him.

His lips settled into a grim line. He realized that perhaps his only

hope lay in the powers behind this thing underestimating him. They were swift and deadly. Getting him preoccupied with a bomb planted in a car while they kidnapped Sonia was evidence of real cunning—especially when they were only going on the surmise that someone would come to investigate and they had no idea who or how many people it would be.

He thought of Carl. The grim line of his mouth relaxed into a tight smile. In a way he hoped they would capture Carl. Carl was a little telepathic. He could contact Carl much easier than he could Sonia, and if Carl and Sonia were together it would make things less difficult.

He reached the highway and turned toward Mansfield, less than a mile distant. The forest dwindled to small pines, then was replaced by wheat land that went up to the city limits.

He slowed to twenty-five miles an hour and sent his mental probes toward Carl. He nodded his satisfaction. So far Carl was safe. Carl was still watching the Buick and hadn't seen any movement from the mine buildings. Carl, of course, was not aware of having been contacted. Ordinarily he might have sensed it, but right now he was too concerned about what might be happening to Sonia, and too busy fighting the impulse to do something on his own to rescue her.

Craig considered trying to contact Sonia, then decided against it. The memory of that searing explosion in his mind when he contacted Theona would not easily be forgotten.

He had reached the city limits. His attention turned toward the buildings that lined the main street ahead of him. The short business district. He recalled what Theona had said in her letter about the shop of the watchmaker. I would be sandwiched in between the drug store and the super market.

But abruptly he swerved in to the curb, shut off the motor, and in a swift movement slid out of the car on the sidewalk side. He was directly in front of a pool hall. He went inside without hesitating, walked swiftly but inconspicuously toward the back. As he hoped, there was an alley exit. He opened the door and stepped out into the alley. Not until then did he pause to question his actions. Without slowing down, he walked to the far end of the alley in the direction of the business district. On the side street he went toward the main street, strolling at a lazy pace.

When he reached the corner he turned toward the business district, but not before he had glanced the other way. In that brief glance he saw the car he had just left. Parked alongside it in the street was a police car.

Turning his back to the scene

and continuing toward the business district, he slowly exhaled a sigh of relief. He had acted unquestioningly on what some people would call a hunch, but which he knew to be what many hunches are—a telepathic alarm system in the brain which acts when someone has turned hostile attention on a person. By a margin of seconds he had escaped the final trap set for him. He knew what it was, now. The Ford had been reported stolen and a state-wide alarm sent out for it. The police would have arrested him and locked him up as a suspected car thief. It might have taken days for him to clear himself in an out-of-the-way place like Mansfield. He still wasn't out of danger. Someone in the pool hall might have noticed him and might describe him to the police.

He hastened his steps, not daring to look back lest the police get curious about him. A burning desire to see the shop of the watchmaker obsessed him. A block away he saw the sign of the supermarket. Partly hidden by that sign was another for a drugstore.

Fighting the impulse to break into a trot, he hurried along. He was almost at the entrance of the supermarket when the sound of a police siren exploded behind him. It was almost on top of him.

Not daring to look in that direction, he went quickly into the supermarket. Had he seen the sign above the watchmaker's that Thelma had described? He was almost

sure he had, as he pushed through the turnstile and hurried toward one of the half-dozen aisles leading toward the back of the store.

At the first cross-aisle he stepped behind a high stack of canned tomatoes on sale and risked a glance toward the front of the store. The police car was plainly visible outside, and two policemen were entering the store with drawn guns. Now there was no question of whom they were after.

For an instant, indecision held him. He could give up and try to tell them the truth. He almost decided that way. Then lights flashed on a gleaming wrist band on one of the policemen. A wristwatch.

Keeping low, he ran, with long silent strides toward the swinging doors at the rear that led into the storerooms. He made it just as he was seen. The doors swung closed on the loud shout.

An open rear door invited him. He ran to it, pushed it open, then ducked back behind the concealment of a pile of cartons. He heard heavy footsteps. He saw a policeman rush out the door into the alley.

More heavy steps sounded, slower. He saw the second policeman open the back door and look out, gun ready. A loud voice from the alley called, "Maybe he's still in there. Take a look around before you come out."

From his concealment Craig saw the cop look around him, his

complexion turning slightly green. He turned back to the alley door and called out, "He ain't in here. Maybe he ducked into the drugstore. I'll run back out front and hold him from that end."

More loud footsteps, then deep silence. Craig was alone, but with a policeman in the alley and one out front. The one in front was afraid—which meant he would probably shoot if he saw the prospects of danger threatening him.

Craig groaned. To have been so close to the watchmaker's, and yet so far!

He waited, listening. There was nothing but silence. He began looking around him, considering ways of escape. The room was filled with orderly stacks of large cartons. His eyes dwelt on several large cartons of toilet paper against the wall nearest him. A plan formed. The rolls of paper would be good protection against bullets.

He searched farther. There was a two wheeled truck—and hanging from a nail on the wall by the alley door was a grocer's apron and a cap. They would be a fair temporary disguise.

He tiptoed out from his concealment and peeked out a window into the alley. He could see no one. He tiptoed to the door to the front and peeked through the crack. Customers and clerks were all near the front, huddled together for protection and courage.

Beyond them, outside on the

sidewalk beside the police car, was one of the cops, looking very brave with his drawn gun. A grin flicked over Craig's worried expression. It vanished as he noticed something about the huddled customers and clerks. On the left wrist of each of them was a watch, its metal band gleaming brightly as though recently polished.

He looked down at his own wristwatch. It gave him a start to see it. Then he remembered that he hadn't visited the watchmaker. Not yet . . .

He tiptoed back and carefully loaded several cartons of toilet paper onto the handtruck. Next he put on the canvas apron and the cap. There was only a chance that this clumsy ruse would fool the cop in the alley, but it was his only chance. Undoubtedly the one out front had used the police car radio to call for reinforcements. Before long the place would be swarming with city and state police.

Now he boldly pushed the hand truck to the alley door and let it open the door and roll out. No shots sounded, so he continued on out, apparently unconcerned.

No one was in sight.

He turned the hand truck toward the drugstore. He hoped there might be a back entrance to the watchmaker's, but the only door besides that of the supermarket was the one entering the drugstore. He paused briefly there, then went on. Entering the drug-

store would be no answer to his present problem. He had to get away.

A doorway on the other side of the alley was open behind a loosely hanging screendoor. He pushed his hand truck over beside it and looked in.

The next instant he had opened the screen door and pushed the truck inside. He frowned. It seemed too easy. Leaving the hand truck, he stole toward the archway leading to the front of the store. From the stock in the back it had to be a men's clothing store.

There were no customers. At first Craig thought the store was empty. Then he saw the clerk sitting with his feet propped up on a counter, to all appearances asleep.

Craig's eyes surveyed the store, then concentrated on the door to the street. It was propped open. There was nothing to stop him from escaping.

Yet, bells were dinning frantic alarm in his brain. His skin tingled with the sense of danger. The hair on his arms rose uncomfortably against the restraining confines of shirtsleeves.

His gaze jerked back to the sleeping clerk. Had the clerk's eyes just closed? Craig had a fleeting impression that they had opened for the instant he was turned away. Craig kept his eyes on the clerk, watching the man's eyes. If he weren't asleep he would soon give himself away.

While he waited, little things

clicked together in his mind. That cop—he hadn't acted like a man searching for a car thief. He had been afraid—of what? And the way they had spotted him so surely—perhaps understandable in a small town where a stranger is conspicuous a block away. But why had the police sounded their siren and let him "escape" into the supermarket? They could have let their car drift in to the curb and captured him easily enough at gun point. Why hadn't they? Had they wanted to make him seem a fugitive trying to escape? A suspect trying to escape could be killed without causing too much notice.

The way things have built up, Craig thought, I could walk out that door and be mowed down by bullets and a hundred witnesses would be willing to testify that I had been running from the law!

So that was why alarm bells had been screaming in his head. Outside this shop were men watching for him to come out—and they would kill him. They intended to kill him.

With him dead, Sonia could be killed and her body dropped down some abandoned mine shaft. Carl could be caught and killed. After that, no one in the outside world would know that anything sinister was developing here in Mansfield.

A town full of slaves. Craig's eyes fixed on the clerk's wristwatch, gleaming from the overhead lights of the store. Suddenly a gleaming

wristwatch band seemed the most sinister thing in the world to him.

A memory hit him with cold shock. He *wanted* one of those wristwatches. He wanted to look inside it and find that little thing that had been placed there by the watchmaker. And here was the ideal opportunity to get one. Sneak up on the clerk, knock him out perhaps, and slip off his watch .

Inch by inch he crept toward the clerk, ready to drop down out of sight at the first sign of movement from the clerk or out in the street. The clerk continued to sleep, and now Craig could hear the soft snoring sound of his breathing. He was a man in his early forties, his nationality indeterminate. He might be Armenian or Russian or even French. Thick chested and long armed. Suggestive of a black haired spider, with a hawkish nose and too full lips. A type that gravitates toward small shops the world over.

After what seemed an eternity Craig stood over him. The regularity of the soft snoring didn't change. Craig doubled up his fist, then slowly relaxed his fingers. It would be a simple job to knock the clerk out if he awakened.

With steady hands Craig slipped his fingers under the expanding wristwatch band, then with infinite care slid the watch over the sleeping man's hand. Finally he straightened with the watch in his hand. The clerk still slept.

Craig looked closely at the watch

now. It was almost identical with his own. In fact, they were the same make! He could slip his own watch on the sleeping clerk and the man probably would never notice the substitution!

It would really be a slick move, Craig decided. First, though, he'd better put the clerk's watch on. Otherwise, if someone barged in to the store and he had to move fast, he might lose it.

He extended his fingers to slip the watch over his hand—and in the next instant without time for thought, he flung the watch away from him. In a continuation of that movement he lashed forward with his fist toward the sleeping clerk.

There was a blur as his fist seemed to meet, then sink into solid flesh. Craig caught his balance and blinked at the space that had been occupied by the clerk's head. It was thin air. The man had vanished.

The chair the man had sat in remained tipped on two legs for another instant, then tipped forward to the floor. The sound was loud in the silence.

Dazed, Craig shook his head violently to clear his senses. He looked around the store, almost hoping to see the man lift his head above a counter. It would be so nice to believe the man had merely ducked his head and slipped away.

The alarm bells in his mind—they were silent now. The danger was past. Craig looked toward the

street door. If there had been any danger out there, he had no presentiment of it now.

He looked back toward the now vacant chair. A chill crept along his spine. He knew now where the danger had lain. If he had put on that wristwatch he would have become a slave of this being from Hell that was able to vanish.

An emotion of helplessness flooded over Craig. How could he hope to defeat such a being? He was only a child in development compared to this man—or devil. It was hopeless to try to do anything.

He looked at the empty chair again. A slow grin spread over his face. Twice in the last hour he had defeated carefully laid plans of the—the watchmaker

THE dim scream of sirens emerged from the distance. They awakened Craig to a realization that he was not yet out of danger. But it was with relief that he realized this was a tangible threat closing in on him. The contrast with what he had just been through was so great that he found himself discounting the danger, welcoming it.

Then he realized that it was still the same threat. The watchmaker had failed in his greatest attempt. He was continuing his first plan of attack.

The scream of sirens was deafening now. Craig retreated toward the back of the clothing

store. As he reached the archway to the rear room he saw two state highway cars coming from opposite directions stop out in the street, uniformed men spilling out with fat, blunt tear gas guns in their hands.

He ducked quickly into the back room. Sirens screamed into the alley at either end. Craig looked around him, hoping to see a place to hide, but knowing that any place would be futile. He glanced up at the smooth ceiling. No skylights. Not a chance of escape. He groaned at the inevitableness of his being caught.

Suddenly the frantic searching of his eyes discovered something he had missed before. The narrow cracks of a trapdoor in the floor. There was a ring, almost hidden under caked dirt. Visions of an unused and musty black hole of a basement made Craig hesitate. Then he dug his fingers into the dirt holding the ring and broke it loose. As the trapdoor lifted he saw wooden steps streaked with fungus. There was no time to test them. He went down, lowering the trapdoor over his head. Total darkness enveloped him. A second later loud footsteps sounded on the floor above. He had been none too soon.

Carefully in the darkness he felt downward, step by step, with his feet, making sure each step would hold him before putting his full weight on it. Finally he stood on the floor. His eyes, accustomed to the darkness now, could make

out faint pinpoints of light around the edges of the trapdoor. There was no other source of light. No windows, or if there were windows they were so caked with grime that they were opaque.

The atmosphere was stale and tangy with the smell of damp mold. He fought the urge to sneeze and took out his cigarette lighter. He let it burn for a brief instant while his eyes surveyed what they could see. A concrete floor, rough concrete walls, several large wooden boxes without lids—and distance that extended under the front of the store.

Fixing what he had seen in his mind, he inched forward cautiously in the darkness until he had gone ten or fifteen feet. He flicked the lighter again.

About to quench it, he gave a grunt of satisfaction and let it burn. He had seen what he had hoped to see. An opening in the side wall that would lead to the basement of the building next door. He went to it and looked through. He saw another basement similar to the one he was in, but here there were signs of use. A furnace that had probably been used during the winter to heat both stores, piles of cardboard boxes nested together, a swept floor, and a stairway leading up to a landing in front of a door.

He closed the cigarette lighter and stood in the darkness, listening. Everything was quiet. His eyes adjusted to the darkness

again. He could see light on the stair landing where it seeped past the door.

Should he go up those stairs and try the door? He considered this. It was risky. The police, not finding him in the clothing store, might try neighboring ones. And anyway, the whole block was being watched.

He considered contacting Carl's mind again to see what was going on there at the mine. But if they had caught Carl and put one of those hellish wristwatches on him it could be dangerous. He flicked the lighter and glanced at his own watch. Five o'clock. Two, maybe three hours until dark.

Everything considered, he decided it would be better to wait at least an hour before doing anything. The police might not find the trap door. They might believe he had escaped. Business in the stores would resume its normal pace. Then it might be possible to slip away.

Using his lighter once more, he fixed himself a hiding place behind some cartons and sat down. He lit a cigarette and relaxed, watching the gleaming coal at the end of the cigarette, his thoughts reviewing what had happened.

The function of the little device placed in watches was now more clear. It was a punishing device, primarily. It might be a device to improve contact with or control of the mind of the wearer, but its primary function now seemed to

be punishment. At least, Craig reflected, that fit the picture he was building up better.

The being that had posed as a sleeping clerk was probably the master mind. And almost certainly was not a living man. The finer matter of the kama-loka or astral plane could be congealed into a semblance of solidity and form a materialization, but there was no evidence pointing unmistakably to dematerialization of the grosser atoms of the material plane. Still, the whole thing seemed to stem from Mansfield being in a mining section. Sonia was being held at a mine, for one thing.

Craig's thoughts returned to the mine aspect of the problem. If a shaft had broken into some underground place, had it released long imprisoned spirits of the dead? Or had it uncovered some strange machine which living persons were using? There were plenty of legends pointing to the ancients knowing the secrets of the occult.

Or had there been living humans in that underground place? He considered this angle and rejected it. The food angle alone made it highly unlikely.

He returned to the watchmaker. The mastermind. And that was an accurate name for him. Never had Craig Barnes encountered an enemy so quick, so multi-layered, in his thinking. In his office in Chicago he had been in contact with Theona Croop less than five minutes when that psychic bolt of

force had struck into his mind. No one could have known who he was nor what he looked like, yet careful and elaborate plans had been made for his reception. The enemy was a master of the defense-in-depth, with booby traps every step of the way. Even now, being bottled up here in this basement might be another facet of the attack.

Another idea jumped into Craig's line of reasoning. The only way the watchmaker had appeared to slip up was in allowing Theona to write that letter to Carl Vance. Was it possible that even that wasn't an unintentional error, but rather, the first step in a deliberate plan? It was a startling thought. What would be the purpose of it? To bring him out here? That was far fetched. But suppose it were true?

Craig turned the idea this way and that. The watchmaker wouldn't have done such a thing to invite destruction of his plans, whatever his eventual plans might be. Could it be the first move in a campaign to destroy all living persons with enough ability along psychic lines to constitute a threat? A hopeless task. There were thousands! In every country in the world there were men and women with powers so great that they could face the combined forces of Satan and come out relatively unscathed! So it couldn't be that.

There remained only one other reason the watchmaker could have had deliberately to coax him out

here to Mansfield, and it jibed with what had happened so far, to a certain extent. Maybe completely. if he assumed the watchmaker also had planted tests of his intelligence on the fatalistic grounds that unless he survived those tests he wasn't worth catching. That one reason was that the watchmaker wanted slaves with the power to help him in his scheme. It made sense. Having enslaved all of Mansfield and found his slaves practically useless to his plans, the watchmaker had tried for bigger game.

An uneasy fear seeped into Craig's emotions. That psychic blast in Chicago could have been deliberately non-lethal—given only to entice him out here. The enemy might only be playing with him, waiting for the opportunity to put an enslaving wristwatch on him. If it ever got to the point where the watchmaker decided it was too much trouble to land him, or too dangerous to play him any more, he might have the ability to destroy him any time, any place. Right now, for example.

Such terrible power was appalling! The watchmaker might be able to materialize right here in this basement, in the darkness a few feet away! He would do so without the faintest whisper of sound, able to see with unknown senses everything here in the darkness.

Such superhuman powers! Craig felt like a moronic child as he con-

templated such vast potentialities. All his life he had struggled upward alone, except for his mother, in developing his own powers. To have such an adept for a teacher!

Perhaps now wasn't the time to try to defeat such an adversary. If he joined the watchmaker willingly he would undoubtedly be very welcome. He would be taught the secrets of this vast power.

To go from one place to another he would no longer need public transportation. If he wanted to be in his office in Chicago—poof! He would be there! Wasn't that the goal of life, to develop to the fullest extent all his latent psychic powers? Of course it was! And here was his opportunity. What a fool he had been not to see it.

The power it would give him! The world was threatened by another war, with atom bombs that might destroy civilization. Although he had no desire for personal power, the world needed a leader capable of making sane decisions. Given the power to rule the world he could, within his lifetime, lift all humanity to the level of western civilization.

In the darkness, he considered the potentialities of the thing. The simple logic of it struck him. If it were possible for him to barge in and destroy this thing going on here in Mansfield while knowing nothing about it, how much easier it would be to destroy it once he was on the inside, acquainted with every ramification of it,

and with the greater psychic powers he would develop while working in? And if—which seemed more than a possibility—he lacked the ability right now to bring complete defeat to the watchmaker, wouldn't it be better to join forces with him and wait until he stood a chance?

It was the only course he could take. It was the wisest course. Here was something he had spent years searching for in the laboratory: a bridge across the planes of reality that could be operated from the material plane independently of the undemonstrable processes of the human mind. Because it seemed to pose a threat to mankind, or might give the watchmaker a temporary power over a few people (perhaps to their own betterment!), he had rushed in like Don Quixote to topple the enemy windmills!

He chuckled in good-natured tolerance of his foolish initial bravado and knight-errantry. Actually, the watchmaker had been very considerate of him, pinning him down while not actually hurting him in any way. The Great could afford to be lenient with stupid mortals, allowing them to arrive at the correct decisions with a minimum of coaching. And in the long run that made the stupid more willing, more loyal.

With a deep sigh of contentment, Craig got to his feet. He knew what he would do now. He would march up the steps and give

himself up to the police. The watchmaker would straighten everything out with the law, and everything would be all right.

He wasn't sure just how the boxes around him were distributed. Automatically he took out his cigarette lighter and flicked it on. He blinked in the feeble rays from the small flame, peering into the gloom at the dancing shadows—and saw the watchmaker.

"HELLO," the watchmaker said.

Craig was fascinated by the movements of the man's lips, the slow, perfect enunciation of the one word. A tremendous wave of good will and friendliness came at him from the man.

"Allow me to introduce myself," the man continued. "I'm Gustavus Altschuler."

"Hello," Craig said. "I'm Craig Barnes."

"I have been standing here in the dark, listening to your thoughts," Altschuler said, his voice rich and deep, with a suggestion of tolerant good nature. He chuckled. "Very good thoughts, too! I like a man who jumps in, then stands still in the excitement long enough to think things through. We'll get along together all right."

Altschuler fixed his eyes on Craig's wristwatch. Craig looked down at it, and without being aware that anything had changed, he glanced down at his lighter,

still burning. He stared at it vaguely. Then—

"Oh!" he said. "I must be getting absent minded." He took out a cigarette and flicked the lighter on again and lit the cigarette. Inhaling deeply, he looked around at the display of clocks hanging on the walls of the shop, at the large board behind Altschuler, filled with wristwatches with tags on them—obviously watches left to be repaired. "That reminds me," he said. "I was passing by and noticed your shop. My watch has been losing time. Would you adjust it for me?"

"Of course, Mr. Barnes," the watchmaker said. He reached over the counter. His deft fingers slipped under the band and withdrew the watch from Craig's wrist. He took the watch to his workbench and took a glass from his vest pocket and cupped it in his eye. Then he took a thin blade and pried the case apart. He took out the works and looked at them through the magnifying glass. Carefully he made an adjustment. Then he opened a drawer under the bench.

Idle curiosity caused Craig to glance down at the drawer. In it was a pile of small metallic shapes too fine for his eyes to make out in detail. He saw Altschuler daintily pick one up with a pair of tweezers and start to insert it in the works of the watch.

Abruptly full realization of what was happening hit Craig. This was what Theona Croop had

described in detail. Even the mental part. A second ago he had had a vague feeling of having passed the shop and dropped in.

By a supreme effort he let none of his awakening show in his expression. He let his eyes rove idly about the shop, wondering if he were still in that basement, or whether by some strange power he had been transported to the watchmaker's shop between the super market and the drugstore.

He tried to pin down in his mind when the transition from basement gloom to store brightness had taken place. He knew now that his cigarette lighter had been burning for a far different reason than absentmindedness.

The whole thing was so subtle, so smoothly inserted in his mind. It could have happened a dozen different ways. He could have been blanked out and led up out of the basement and around to this shop, then snapped out of the hypnotic trance with a post-hypnotic command that would take care of the transition and jump. Or he could still be in that basement. If he tried to attack the watchmaker the whole shop might vanish and be replaced by the basement again.

"There you are," Altschuler said, snapping the case together and extending the watch.

Craig hastily reached into his pocket and brought out his wallet, holding it in both hands. "Fine," he said heartily. "How much do I owe you?"

Altschuler still held out the wristwatch. His dark eyes looked keenly at Craig, then down at the wallet. "There will be no charge," he said.

"Oh, come now," Craig said, "you can't make a living that way. I'll tell you what—I'm going to be in Mansfield for a few days; my watch needs cleaning, so I think I'll leave it with you. Clean it up for me. That's probably why it was losing time anyway. Dirt." He put his wallet back in his pocket with an air of carelessness, and took a step toward the street door. He smiled at Altschuler. "I'll drop in the end of the week for it," he said.

There was a baffled light in Gustavus Altschuler's dark eyes as Craig opened the door. And the solidity of the door gave Craig a thrill. It *felt* solid.

He stepped out onto the sidewalk. The familiar supermarket was a few feet away. There were no police cars in evidence.

Craig dared to look back at the watchmaker's shop. He saw Altschuler still standing there, holding the wristwatch, looking at him through the window, the baffled light still in his eyes.

Craig waved a cheery goodbye and walked away. He was trembling so much he felt he would sink to the sidewalk with every step. It was an emotional reaction. Inside, he was almost hysterical with exultation. Once more he had beaten the watchmaker! He wanted

to throw back his head and laugh unrestrainedly. He wanted to tell the passers-by what he had done. He wanted to run as though the hounds of hell were after him, and hide in some hidden cave.

He was afraid. More afraid than he had ever been in his life. That realization sobered him, slowly. He had to get hold of himself and not panic. Automatically he glanced at his wrist. His watch was not there—and it was the most wonderful thing in the world for it not to be.

HE began to walk faster. As he neared the edge of town he broke into a slow, space-eating trot, every sense alert for the first sign of danger. It might come from anywhere. A police car, a pedestrian; even a passenger car might veer toward him without warning. He sensed that he had dealt Gustavus Altschuler a devastating blow. When the man recovered he would realize that he had to destroy him, and quickly.

Before he had gone a quarter of a mile he decided to leave the highway and cut across the fields. Besides cutting down the danger of unexpected attack, it would save him a mile or so of distance. He cut diagonally across a wheat field. The stubble quickly cut into the soft leather of his shoes, but he kept on, trying to keep up his pace.

He came to a graded dirt road that went in the right direction

and decided to give up the fields. He was panting from the exertion, but after a quarter of a mile along the road he got his second wind.

His panic was completely gone now. He wanted to stop and think out what had happened. He felt sure he knew exactly what he was up against now, and what he must do about it. The trouble was, he realized, that he might be wrong. And he wouldn't get a second chance. He was free now only because he had been grossly underestimated.

He reached a rise in the road which enabled him to see the highway, a half-mile away. Even as he glanced that way he saw police cars speeding toward Mansfield. If he had continued on the highway he would have been caught.

He came to the top of the rise. More farms stretched out ahead of him. Beyond them were the rolling hills covered with forests. He stopped. Shading his eyes from the sun, low on the horizon, he studied the landscape in the direction of the mine. Finally he made out the sloping roof of the ore processing plant nested against the side of the mountain. It wasn't more than a mile and a half away in a straight line.

For several minutes he studied the farmland between him and the mine, memorizing it. Then he left the road and went to a small cluster of three year old pines. Far enough in so that he could

not be seen he lay down.

Less than ten minutes later a police car sped by on the road, silent and swift. Craig grinned at it from the concealment of his hiding place. He had taken to cover just in time.

A few minutes later the bloated red sun touched the horizon. It would be gone before the search could settle down to a systematic covering of every clump of brush and every cluster of trees. The darkness would be in his favor, not theirs.

INCH by inch the sun set until it was gone. For a little while the illusion of growing brightness and dimming visibility that is the twilight of the northern United States remained. Then the shadows of night grew strong. One star after another winked into existence. A thin crescent moon hung at an unnatural angle high in the eastern sky. Far away a dog howled mournfully, as though sensing that this night might bring death.

Craig stirred himself and stood up, stretching to loosen his muscles that had become stiff with inaction. He left the thicket and stood in the wheat stubble, looking along the road.

Back toward town he saw lights of a car that moved slowly. From time to time a spotlight briefly surveying a cluster of trees or a clump of bushes. The systematic search had begun, and he had no doubt that if he were il-

luminated by the spotlight he would meet with a hail of bullets. There were only two possible futures ahead of him now: victory or death.

Ignoring the police car which was still a half a mile away, he looked up into the sky, locating the north star. From it he turned his eyes until he had picked out another star in the direction of the mine. It would move with the passage of time, but it would do as a guide.

He remembered suddenly Carl's request for him to bring back some sandwiches, and smiled in the darkness. The memory made him realize he was both hungry and thirsty. He reached down and broke off a straw and put it in his mouth. As it grew wet it tasted slightly sweet and rather pleasant.

He began walking through the wheat stubble, keeping his eyes on the star so he would keep a straight line. He wanted to reach his goal on the button and not have to blunder around in the darkness searching for it. Not only did his life depend on it, perhaps the future of the human race depended on it. If he didn't destroy the monstrous thing he had uncovered it would grow too big for any man to stop.

He reached a barbed wire fence and climbed over it. Making sure of his direction again, he kept on. He climbed over three more fences before he changed direc-

tion. Now he had the dark outlines of buildings to guide him.

Although the buildings were merely vague blobs, he knew the major details of each. He had seen them before at close quarters. There was a huge structure with steeply sloping roof. There were other and smaller structures. He stole silently toward one of these.

As he drew nearer he made out faint cracks of light. The interior was well lighted with tightly drawn shades. He circled the building without finding any place where he could peek inside. At the foot of the steps he hesitated, then cautiously tried the first step.

Voices erupted from inside, too muffled for words to be made out. Then suddenly, "They haven't located him yet!" in a woman's voice. The rumble of a man's voice answered her.

In the darkness a grin flickered over Craig's lips as he took the second step. Any doubts he had had were now gone. He knew every facet of the mystery. It had been there from the very beginning, if he had only had sense enough to see it.

He took another step, then felt forward with his foot, encountering only smooth extent. He was on the porch. With infinite caution he slid his feet forward, step after step, until his groping hands touched the wall.

He explored with his finger tips until he found the frame of the door. He groped downward with

light touch until he came in contact with the knob.

Was the door locked? He didn't dare try it to find out. He would have to hit it with enough force to open it if it were locked, and be ready to pull himself up short if it weren't, or he would find himself sprawling into the room off balance. He had to have an instant of surprise in his favor. The freedom of the world depended upon it.

With his hand on the doorknob he drew back and bunched his shoulder. Throwing every ounce of physical strength he possessed into the one convulsive movement, he hit the door, twisting the knob at the last instant.

The splintering of wood was a deafening sound. Craig landed on his feet, his eyes trying to adjust to the bright light. Two figures moved—blobs of color in his eyes. A scream came from one of them. He leaped toward it as his eyes came into clearer focus. He lashed out with his fist and felt it encounter something hard.

He whirled. The man was staring at him with wide eyes, still paralyzed by surprise. Without a pause Craig darted in and seized the man's hand, clawing at the wristwatch. The man screamed just as the wristwatch came free. Craig felt a numbing shock constrict his fingers and paralyze his arm. He was thrown backward by the constriction of his own muscles. The force ceased

abruptly. The watch had fallen from his hand to the floor.

He shook his arm in a frantic effort to get it to working again. With a bellow of fear and rage the man charged at him, fists flailing. Craig sidestepped, letting the man lurch past him. He worked at his arm some more during the precious seconds he had gained. It remained partially numbed and useless.

The man charged again. Craig didn't get out of the way in time. A heavy fist struck him in the mouth and sent him backward, bringing up against the wall. The man followed, reaching Craig with several long punches that had lost their main force.

The element of surprise was no longer in Craig's favor. He sidestepped and got away from the wall. He weaved and danced just beyond reach of the man, darting in for quick jabs. He was beginning to sense that he might lose this fist fight. The terrible cost if he did lose it made him desperate. With a wild lunge he got in past the man's guard. Then he went berserk, his fists working like pistons.

The man stood up under the blows stubbornly. Sobbing his despair, Craig backstepped out of range. Suddenly the man drooped his fists.

"All right," he said, "you don't have to hit me any more. I'm myself now—for the first time in a long time."

"Thanks," Craig gasped. He turned from the man and bent down beside the woman. He touched her face. She moaned weakly and moved. With swift desperation Craig hit her just under the ear. Her head jerked and she became limp again.

He straightened up and looked at the man. The man looked from Craig to the woman, his eyes mirroring fear.

"There's some sleeping pills she used to make me take," he said.

"Get them," Craig said.

The man left the room. In a moment he returned with a small pill box. He handed it to Craig. Craig opened it and recognized the drug from the capsules. Ignoring the man, he bent down beside the woman and pushed a capsule into her mouth, well back. When he squeezed her mouth closed she gulped convulsively, swallowing the capsule. He repeated the performance several times until he had given her almost a lethal dose—enough to keep her unconscious for at least twelve hours.

He straightened. "Where's my secretary, Sonia Mills?" he demanded.

"She's down in the cave," the man said. "That other feller is down there with her. They caught him skulking out in the woods near the ore plant."

"Can we get down into the cave from here?" Craig asked.

"Yes. Sure." The man went to the woman and bent down, taking

a key chain from her dress pocket.

"What's the matter with mommy?"

Craig whirled in the direction of the voice. A little girl was standing in an open doorway, her eyes swollen with sleep.

"Mommy's asleep, Pat," the man said patiently. "You go back to bed. I have to go out with this man."

The innocent little face turned toward Craig, then the little girl's eyes turned toward the splintered door. "What's the matter with the door, daddy?" she asked.

"It got broke, honey. Now you go back to bed. You should be asleep."

"I was." The little girl smiled very gravely at Craig and went back into the bedroom, closing the door.

The man looked at Craig without expression. "I'll get a flashlight," he said. "It's in the pantry." He disappeared through another door, returning a moment later with a five cell flashlight.

Craig followed the man outside. Less than a quarter of a mile away was the headlights of a car and a spotlight cutting a wide path over the wheat field. The man turned on the flashlight. The next moment the spotlight on the car went out and the headlights began moving swiftly toward them.

"Turn out the light!" Craig said. "And move fast. That's the police and they're after me."

"I can well imagine," the man

said, shutting off the flashlight. "I'm doing this for—all of them."

He trotted ahead in the darkness with Craig right behind him. He stopped at a small building. The sound of metal grating against metal became lost in the louder sound of the police car turning off the road into the driveway. The door swung open. Craig followed the man into the interior darkness without hesitation.

"Close the door," the man said. When it was closed he turned on the flashlight and reached past Craig to slide a heavy bolt in place in the door.

Craig's eyes were wide with surprise at what the flashlight revealed. Almost the entire floor was the floor of an elevator. In the rafters of the building were large drums with cables attached to the top of the elevator frame.

The door they had just entered through rattled violently. "Open up in there or we'll shoot!" a loud voice demanded.

"That's Mirch," Craig's companion said. "Get on. He's likely to shoot."

Craig stepped onto the elevator. His companion pushed the control lever over to full speed, and the elevator dropped so swiftly that Craig gasped in alarm. Seconds later it slowed abruptly to a stop, level with a rough passageway shored up with heavy timbers.

The two men stooped and went into the passageway. It went straight for over a hundred yards,

then ended at a rough archway cut in solid stone. They stepped into a high arched tunnel whose walls were smooth and without cracks, and whose floor had shallow grooves an inch apart running parallel with the walls.

"This is the original tunnel," Craig's companion explained. "It ends back that way with a cave-in about two hundred yards. The big room with the machine is up ahead."

They came to a steel wall barring the way. There was a small door in it. The man unlocked the padlock with one of the keys on the ring. He was taking the padlock out of the staple when he jerked suddenly. The next instant a deafening explosion sounded.

As Craig caught his slumping companion a sound like a hammer blow erupted from the door. Another explosion came from down the tunnel.

"That damn — Mirch!" the wounded man grunted. "Get through that door and leave me here before you get shot! He meant to hit you, not me."

Craig recognized the sense of that, but he hesitated. "How do you shut off the machine?" he asked.

Another bullet splattered against the door so close to him that he could feel its heat.

"I don't know!" the man groaned.

Craig pushed open the door and leaped inside. He groaned as he realized he had forgotten the flash-

light. He had to have it.

Dropping prone, he inched out until he could reach it and shut it off. He pulled back through the doorway and slammed the heavy metal door shut. When he turned on the flashlight again he saw the heavy sliding bar that would lock the door from this side so that nothing could break it down.

He regretted not bringing the wounded man in with him. He knew though that he had been right. The police were his friends and would get him to a doctor quickly if he needed it.

He turned his back to the door and directed the flashlight beam ahead of him. The passageway continued on as far as the light penetrated. He took time now to examine the walls of the tunnel. They seemed to be of fine granite. The dimensions of the tunnel were so uniform that it didn't seem possible human hands could have shaped it.

How many centuries ago had it been carved? Ten thousand years more, perhaps, during the peak of a prehistoric civilization far in advance of the present one! Or were some of the legends and tales of ancient cultures built by creatures from out of space true? There might never be an answer.

Craig hurried forward along the tunnel. It seemed to widen far ahead. He tried to keep track of distance, and soon guessed he must be under the hill where the ore processing shed was.

At last he reached the end of the tunnel and stepped out into a large space with the roof broken up into small domes supported at their common lower points by pillars six feet thick.

He stood still, playing the flashlight beam past the rows of pillars in search of something that would seem to be the unknown machine. What would it look like? He couldn't think of anything. It might not even look like a machine.

Finally he shut off the flashlight and stood in the darkness, letting his eyes adjust. And presently through the darkness he saw a faint bluish glow. He realized at once that it wasn't light. It was astral light similar to the human aura! No spectroscope or camera would have registered a thing.

He went forward in the darkness, holding out his hand to keep from bumping into a pillar. He didn't stop until he was less than ten feet from the pulsing blue aura. Every cell of his body tingled with exhilaration as though intoxicated. There was psychic force here greater than anything conceivable, and it was independent of any living or sentient entity.

He hesitated about turning on the light, trying to visualize from the shape of the aura what the machine itself would look like. It was quite large, standing about ten feet high, and perhaps six by eight feet on its base. It seemed more to be a huge block of solid stuff than a machine made of parts.

But that might not be so. The human aura didn't follow the human shape. So the machine might be almost any shape.

Craig didn't waste time on further speculation. He turned on the flashlight.

What the light revealed was disappointing. A rod of metal roughened by oxidation, a dull gray color, rose from the stone floor. The rod was about four inches in diameter and four feet high. He would have passed it by if he hadn't seen its aura in total darkness.

He walked around the rod, searching for some small detail that would indicate structure or controls. There was nothing, yet he was certain this was the machine. He reached out to touch it but drew back his hand. The rod might be radioactive—almost certainly was for the machine still to have power after so many centuries. He drew away from it with new caution.

He circled it slowly at a distance of five feet without finding anything pointing to the nature of the machine. How did it function?

He thought of the principles of high frequency radio waves. With them the shape and size of the broadcasting antenna was very important. But from radio theory the natural frequency of this rod would be in the longer infra-red band, and certainly not in anything that would indicate something mental.

"Of course!" he exclaimed aloud at a sudden inspiration. "The rod is only the material anchor of the machine itself, and the machine is in the kama-loka, the astral plane!"

Craig went over to one of the thick pillars of stone and sat down with his back against it. He shut off the flashlight and laid it down beside him on the floor. He closed his eyes.

He was suddenly tired. Exhausted. He hadn't had any rest for so many hours that he couldn't remember when he had felt fresh. It would be so nice to just sleep a natural sleep and forget everything. The machine could wait. He was safe here anyway. He had the keys, and the door was barred from inside.

And anyway, the machine shouldn't be shut off. It was such a wonderful instrument . . . a bridge between two universal planes of reality. A bridge uniting two universes into one. It could make gods out of mortals. Look what it had done to Gus Altschuler.

Craig's lips parted in a smile of confidence. He knew his thoughts were hypnotically induced by Altschuler. The man was somewhere in this underground cavern—or at least his astral body was here. He wanted to lull Craig until he could get here in the flesh and deal with him. Kill him.

But Gus wouldn't kill him. Not good old Gus. He wanted him to be his partner. Together they could

present this machine from a lost era to the world. It would advance civilization a million years overnight.

Gus walked out of the shadows and stood over him. He no longer seemed a mere mortal. His aura was laced with white and silver and gold and subtle variations of purest blue. Only a true god could possess an aura so beautiful.

"Come, my child," Gus said with godlike dignity. "Stand up beside me at my right hand. You shall be my son."

Craig smiled. It was the final booby trap of the master mind. If he disassociated himself from his physical body for even an instant Gustavus Altschuler would unleash the full force of the machine and destroy his soul. But if he stayed within the protection of knit matter behind his unbroken astral shell of protection, he could never shut off the machine.

He looked up at the god who invited him to join him, be his son. It seemed impossible that such a god could harbor an evil or treacherous thought. It was his own evil and suspicious soul that dreamed up such absurd thoughts. He wasn't worthy of becoming full partner of such a god. A god himself!

Craig felt the tingling separation of spirit and body begin with his lower extremities and creep upward toward his hips. Ahead of him lay destruction of his soul—no! Ahead of him lay the power and peace of true godhead, backed

by the infinite power of the bridge that linked two universes and made them One.

Gustavus Altschuler extended a hand to help him rise. Gus. The watchmaker!

Craig smiled slowly. He felt the disassociation of his astral body become complete, but he continued to lie within his physical frame as though still tied to it.

He looked past Gus at the machine. He could see it now in all its intricate details, and studied it in search of the controls. The astral projection of the watchmaker was solid to him now.

And he was ready.

He leaped to his feet and lashed out at Altschuler, knowing that he could not hurt him, but only knock him temporarily out of coordination. In a straight battle he could hope for nothing but stalemate. But one thing was in his favor. Gus had swung from the one extreme of underestimating him to the other extreme of overestimating his powers. Gus was afraid of him. Gus was basically a coward!

He projected that thought at the godlike figure with its beautiful and fantastic aura. The figure drew back and wavered. In that instant Craig darted around Gus to the machine. There were several control buttons, each with a strange symbol under it. He would have to guess which control shut the machine off. Six control buttons. One chance out of six for mankind. Or

two chances before Gus rallied.

Viciously Craig jabbed down on a button. The almost inaudible hum within the machine grew higher in tone. Once more Craig jabbed at a button. In the same instant he felt himself lifted by a terrible force and thrown across the cavern. But even as he felt himself hurtling toward destruction he sensed that the machine was off. He had shut it off!

CRAIG and Sonia and Carl stood outside the airport depot watching the plane circling in for a landing. Their bags were on a cart just outside the fence. They would be the only passengers boarding the Chicago plane from Billings. With the bags they had brought from Chicago was a small wooden box. In it was the metal rod that had anchored the machine to the material plane. The rod was cut up into small sections.

"Well," Craig said, "I'm glad that's over." He turned to Carl with a broad grin. "And don't you dare show me another letter from your readers for at least a month. I want to rest up. Besides, if you showed up with another letter during the next month or two I would be too busy to see you. I'm going to study the alloy of that rod." He turned his grin on Sonia. "What's eating you?" he said. "You look as mad as a wet hen. You've been that way ever since I rescued you from that room in the ore house."

"Certainly I'm mad," Sonia said.

"When we get to Chicago I'm quitting my job."

"Why?" Craig asked, a twinkle in his eyes.

"Why did you have to let us stay locked up without food or water for almost twenty-four hours after you could have rescued us? I'll tell you why. You went to sleep. I know you were tired, but why couldn't you have rescued us first and then slept in a nice comfortable bed?"

"I'm sorry," Craig said contritely. "If you'll stay on the job I promise never to do that again." He chuckled.

"But that isn't all," Sonia went on inexorably. "I came out here to help you solve a mystery. What happened? Nothing! That's what happened. Nothing! I sat in a board room with nothing but mice for company the whole time!"

"You were lucky," Craig said. "I would have traded places with you."

Carl chuckled. "Can the act, Sonia. You know you wouldn't quit your job for anything. You were just unlucky this time. Maybe next time you'll be captured by a fiend who likes to torture women."

"That isn't what I mean," Sonia said, half angrily. "And another thing—how did you know that Theona Croop was the real power behind things?"

"I didn't at first," Craig said soberly. "Things just began to add up. They don't all add up even yet, but they never do in psychic phe-

nomena. I should have guessed from the start though. The jolt I got when I tried to contact her by the psychic emanations from her letter. It wasn't anywhere near a full blast. She could have killed me if she wanted to. But she was in love with me."

Carl and Sonia both gasped. "How do you figure that?" Carl said.

"Let's do a bit of reconstructing the way I see things," Craig said. "Gus Altschuler owned that mine. It had been shut down for several years because the mine wasn't paying, but he dreamed of finding another paying vein. He had his watchmaker's shop, and on weekends, he would go out and do a little mining on his own. He broke through into this ancient tunnel. It didn't seem anything but an old tunnel to him—maybe a natural formation. He didn't know much about formations.

"Then he and Theona fell for each other and used to meet secretly at the mine. He didn't know she was psychic. One day he showed her his tunnel. She saw the aura of the machine and got excited about it. While Gus watched over her she went into a trance and left her body, and learned how to turn the thing on. When it was turned on it was easy for her to find the store of those little pilot sets sealed up in that metal box she showed us after it was all over. And it didn't take much experimenting for her

and Gus to find out their purpose. Some of them were control units. Others were receivers. She and Gus wore the remote control units and Gus inserted the receivers in the watches. The real power was in that machine. It obeyed Theona's every wish with an exactness that must have come from centuries of scientific perfection. She saw a way to expand her power until she ruled the whole world with that machine. Gus thought he was her partner in it, but he was just a pawn in her larger scheme. She planned to get rid of him eventually anyway. But then she got to reading about my investigations of things as written by our 'friend' Carl, who likes to build me up big to make things interesting for the readers of his articles. And she undoubtedly saw my picture in a magazine. She decided I was the one to rule the world with her. But even with me she wanted to have the upper hand. She was in love with me though."

"When did you decide that, master mind?" Sonia said.

"When Gus had me completely in his power and suddenly couldn't do anything about it. I was in his shop. He had put the receiver gadget in my watch. All he had to do was put the watch on my wrist. I couldn't have prevented it. And suddenly I was able to stall him off and walk out of his shop. It was then that everything clicked into place. The only thing that could account for my being given

my temporary freedom was someone weakening. There was no reason for that unless Theona were more than a slave and were in love with me." Up until that moment I had believed what she implied in her letter—that she was an unwitting victim. That, of course, was a factual description of what the real victims, the townspeople, went through. That machine could plant any kind of illusion in a person's head!"

"So," Carl said, "it was love that tripped up Theona."

"Partly," Craig said. He lit a cigarette and watched the plane coming in for a landing. "It was mostly something more basic than love. Conscience. Did you ever notice how many criminals behave with utter stupidity when they are just on the point of getting away with their crimes? Look at the Robert Hall kidnapping case. The kidnapper got away with it. He had the six hundred thousand dollars. All he had to do was sit back and use a little common sense. Instead, he carted the money around with him in taxis and parked it in hotel rooms. He showed it to people he didn't know. He practically forced people to turn him in. *His conscience demanded that he pay for his crime.* Look at the Ciucci murders in Chicago last fall. He intended to make the deaths all look like deaths from burning. But he put a pillow over the head of one child and wrapped a nighty around the head of an-

other. He left the gun on the scene. He told his girl friend in effect that he was going to commit the murders before he did it. *While he planned and executed the murders his conscience was carefully planning to bring him to justice and punishment.*

"I think the same basic dualism of purpose worked in Theona. While she dreamed of ruling the world, with me beside her, the very fact that she felt the need of a recognized adept showed her recognition that she would be miserable ruling the world alone. In fact, she didn't want to rule it at all. She wanted to belong to the MAN whom she had chosen to rule it. And under that was the subconscious realization that it was wrong, and she should be stopped. *The part of her mind that knew she should be stopped was always working against her.*"

Craig dropped his cigarette and ground it out with his shoe. He looked at Sonia and sighed deeply.

"In a way," he said sadly, "I'm sorry it turned out the way it did. When she gets out of the state hospital for the insane poor Ted will take her back again and care for her. But basically she has the potentialities for greatness. True greatness. It's too bad that she didn't meet someone who really understood her when she was younger. Someone able to keep her in line and down to earth. A manager as well as a lover and husband. Or maybe I'm just feeling

sorry for Ted. He's a fine man and deserves something better in life than unhappiness. Sometimes I wish I could reach into the lives of such people and straighten them out, make them happy."

"You too?" Sonia said with mocking softness that tried unsuccessfully not to reveal sympathetic understanding.

"Even me," Craig said stubbornly. "At times I suppose every man wishes he could rule the world for its own good."

"You know," Carl Vance said, "that's an interesting thought. Now that I think of it, maybe even Hitler's guilt complexes worked toward his ruin. Some of his ac-

tions and decisions make sense in that light." He stared at the passengers getting off the plane and coming toward them. Suddenly he shuddered.

"What's the matter, Carl, cold?" Sonia said.

"No. I'm just beginning to realize that if I ever go crooked the person I'm going to have to be most afraid of is myself!"

"I wonder what became of the watchmaker?" Craig said absently. "The police said he skipped out. Probably it was just as well he did." He lifted his arm and glanced at his wrist. "Oh good lord!" he exclaimed. "My watch! I forgot to get it!"

Editorially Speaking...

(Continued from page 5)

sent a new feature, by a woman who has a strange psychic ability to "tell your fortune" by means of cards, which the reader can lay out for himself and forward to her for interpretation. Ordinarily, we'd warn anybody to be cautious of such things, as there are a multitude of frauds in this fortune-telling business, but in the case of this new feature, we want to make it clear that this is not a business of fortune-telling, but of "psychic reading." It might be explained this way: In the process of laying out the cards according to the diagram which will be furnished, it may be that your psychic "impression" is made upon

them, and although the cards themselves and their denominations are not used in making the predictions, the psychic impression is, and it is by purely psychic means that our new contributor makes her comments. That you will find them nothing short of phenomenal, your editor can guarantee, for he made personal tests before he invited a continuation in the magazine. Your editor did not lay out any cards, but just the same, the answers were the most amazing your editor has ever experienced. Predictions and comments made were exact to the minutest detail, and consisted of things only your editor knew about. For those of

you who will say "mental telepathy," it's all right with us; and for those of you who must add "precognition" because the events had not yet happened, we will cautiously say: "maybe." Let's just be safe and call it "lucky guesses," then we won't have to worry about it. Anyway, we predict that those of you who avail yourselves of our new feature's offer will be amazed at the accuracy of her "lucky guesses."

We have a number of other interesting new departments to add, and they will be included just as fast as we can accomplish the work necessary to include them.

Speaking of work, perhaps you'd be interested to know just how MYSTIC is produced and brought to you? The "staff" of MYSTIC consists of two people; your editor and Bea Mahaffey, who is the hardest-working Irish lassie you'd care to know, and incidentally one of the most beautiful. Miss Mahaffey holds sway in the office, which is located in Evanston, Illinois, and she handles all the mechanical production problems, such as the printers, typesetters, secretarial work and all the details of office management and production contact. In addition to his, she does the same on two science fiction magazines, and edits both of these latter! Several full-time jobs rolled up into one.

Your editor does his work on his farm near Amherst, Wisconsin, and works in an upstairs room

which is always such an incredible mess that the few people who have seen it claim it is physically impossible to establish any sort of order, much less accomplish any actual work. Yet there is actual work done here. Many another editor or publisher would raise his eyebrows if he knew that your editor personally handles all subscriptions, from the initial receipt of the order, to the making of the address plate, and the addressing of the envelopes in which the magazines are shipped each month. The walls are lined with back copies, envelopes, addressing plates, stacks of unread (and read) manuscripts, galleys, printers proofs, typewriters and addressing machinery, and in fact the entire mechanical setup of editing and distributing a magazine, except for the actual printing and trucking facilities.

There are files and boxes and just plain piles of information of all kinds. Reference books, newspaper clippings and scrap books. There are piles of unanswered correspondence. In fact, such a tremendous volume of personal mail comes in that it is impossible to answer it all, yet there it sits, with every intention on the part of your editor to get to it eventually. Therefore, if you are one of those people who have written and wonder when you will receive an answer, please accept this as an apology, and a hope; you never can tell, it might be answered any-

way!

Yes, two people do all of this work. Three magazines. Even all the circulars soliciting subscribers are stuffed, sorted, bundled, mailed by your editor personally (with the assistance of his wife and three small children ranging from 3 to 10, who love to stuff envelopes!).

Which brings us to a very important request. The reason we do all this mailing for subscribers is because it's necessary. The amount of money necessary to launch a new magazine is incredible. Due to the crush of magazines on the newsstands, many new magazines are returned by the newsdealer without even being opened. Sometimes as many as *half* of the total magazines distributed never even see the light of day! This is an incredible, but true situation. It takes a year of plugging to convince the dealer it is fruitless to return them without trying to sell them, so he might as well put them on his newsstand. All this costs much money. Just try to count the magazines on your newsstand someday! So, in order to bear this great expense, we are forced to reach people interested in our magazine by mail. Many of them subscribe, thus helping to ease the load; the others learn by reading the circular that we exist and they seek us out on the newsstand. It is a process of gradual buildup. Newsdealers who receive requests for a new magazine, will stock it. Therefore, we have two favors to

ask of you. Next time you are at a newsstand, and you do not see **MYSTIC** on sale, ask the newsdealer why he doesn't stock that wonderful new magazine, **MYSTIC**. The other request is a more important one—will you subscribe *now* to **MYSTIC** for 12 issues for \$3.00, and help us make sure we are able to keep plugging at those dealers until we are on sale everywhere? If you honestly believe this magazine is doing a good job, and you feel it should be given more than ordinary support, then the best thing you can do is to *lend* us \$3.00 for 12 issues. We promise to pay it back every two months at the rate of a 35¢ magazine, until you have received \$4.20 worth of magazines. That's interest at the rate of *forty* percent! Where can you get more interest on your money?

Just recently a big-time magazine circulation expert laughed at us. He said: "You'll never get one out of a hundred readers to respond to an appeal like that! They just won't back up their beliefs even if they have them! Not for three bucks, they won't!" Let's take up that challenge. You, every one of you, sit down right now and mail in your subscription, address it to Ray Palmer, Amherst, Wisconsin, and we'll publish the score in the magazine. Anytime we can't beat the materialists on their own home floor, we'll eat every paper dollar they beat us by!

Rap

MENTAL PROJECTION

By Walter G. Smith

In the following pages of this factual article, you will learn the art of Mental Projection, that mysterious power that many seem to have, of projecting their senses from their body, and seeing and experiencing things far away. It does work for some people—perhaps you are one of them.



I SWOOPED down the length of the bed and went sky-rocketing up through the ceiling and roof of the house and on out into space at a terrific speed. This was an experience that happened to me almost every night back in 1935. It was alarming at times, but it led to a definite technique of traveling outside of one's physical body without losing conscious control of the body during that interval. Many people find that they can perform this feat of traveling in space and time. Perhaps you can too! The technique is simple enough provided you can arrange the proper atmosphere and frame of mind. Would you like to try?

The ability to travel in space came very suddenly and without any effort to induce it. The reaction was a mixed one of bewilderment and curiosity. I had no previous knowledge of the occult nor any particular interest in the subject. As the experience demanded an answer. I set about to find it.

One night I was idly gazing at the light bulb in my desk lamp and not having anything else to do I indulged in a kind of meditative question and answer game. "What makes the bulb glow," I thought to myself. "Why it's current held in resistance by a little bit of wire suspended in vacuum," was the answer. "What would happen if body current could be held in resistance?" After tossing this idea about for a little the answer came,

"why not try it and find out." I had read that the function of seeing and hearing utilized considerable nerve force. So why not plug into those circuits and make use of that current. I put my hands to my head and the thumbs landed on the ear channel and the little fingers on the eyelids with the other fingers on the forehead. Now what should we use for a resistor. Wires don't resist body currents like they do voltage. We will have to get something more definitely in the nature of a resistor—"Why that's glass!" and my glance fell upon a small sphere of blue glass that I keep on my desk. "Just the thing!" I grabbed it and held it between the tips of the fingers. Then I put my hands to my head again in the same position as before and the sphere of blue glass touched the center of my forehead. The position recalled to mind the position of rare jewels when incorporated in the design of oriental statues. There might be significance to this. My hands seemed to tingle and then the idea came—"turn the light on." I thought of looking through the blue glass marble. Suddenly there was brilliant light. The sight seemed to come into focus and then appeared surging clouds or mists. They started parting at the center making an opening that gradually widened. Beyond was the clear blue sky. There came a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment and then the reply,

"This is the answer to many things." My hands trembled in excitement. The glass ball fell to the floor but the feeling "this is the answer," remained. Truly it was the answer as events unfolded.

Now many people have various opinions as to the possibility of traveling in space without being in their physical bodies. To some this is fantasy or imagination to others, a dream. Some would interpret it as a form of mental telepathy. If the claim were made, that this ability to travel were a reality (though not a physical reality) no doubt proof would be required. So here is the manner in which proof may be obtained through your own efforts rather than to believe some enthusiast's statements or claims.

First you try the technique which briefly stated is as follows: Obtain a sphere of glass about one inch in diameter. Lie down in a comfortable position with nothing under the head. Place a pillow under each elbow so that when the hands are placed on the forehead, the arms will be well supported by the pillows and require no muscular tension to maintain that position. Now pick up the glass sphere so that it is held by the tips of the second and third fingers of each hand. Place the sphere on the forehead. Let the little fingers rest lightly on the closed eyelids, the first or index fingers high on the forehead or in the hair, and the thumbs in the channel of the

ears or just before them.

Now take a deep breath and relax all over. The arms being supported at the elbows will require no attention and the fingers placed on the head should assume a fairly relaxed position. Think of looking through the glass sphere as though it were a single eye in the center of the forehead. Forget all other things and concentrate upon looking. Usually a mist is seen. You then think of walking through that mist. Get the idea of going through what you see and you will find that the sensation of traveling will also occur. Some people find it very easy to walk through the mist. Others require much mental effort to penetrate it. Some don't even see a mist and, if it is total blackness, usually the technique is non operative for them. The only way you will be able to know is to try it out yourself and discover that through your own efforts.

Now, no doubt, you want the proof. This may be obtained by encouraging another person to perform the same feat that you have performed. A certain factor of reasonableness must also enter into this proof. That factor is one of practice.

If you wanted to prove to someone that you could shoot an arrow into a target at some distance, it would be reasonable that you had handled a bow and arrow before making a wager that you could do it. The same thing is true

with this technique if you want valid proof of its effectiveness. You and the other person with whom you are going to make the check should acquire some degree of experience with this process. Then, when you have become acquainted with it, enter upon the experiment and it will give you the proof you seek. It may be accomplished in the following manner. Let's refer to the two people doing the experiment as Smith and Jones. Each one has an assistant. Smith's assistant makes out two lists of numbers from 1 to 10 leaving a blank space opposite the numbers on the list he gives to Jones' assistant but on his list he fills in after each number an area of the physical body. For example he writes after number 1—the left elbow, after 2—the right knee, number 3—the top of the head and so on down to number 10. The only one who knows this list is Smith's assistant who made it up.

Smith and Jones each with their assistants go into separate rooms. These rooms may be adjacent or may be separated by a few or even hundreds of miles. When the separation is out of range of the audible voice, then it is well to have a telephone connection just so that both parties may start at the same moment.

Now Smith and Jones agree on a third location known to them both where they will meet, not physically of course, but in their

projected forms. When they have thus encountered each other, the physical Smith speaks to his assistant and asks for the first item. So Smith's assistant looks at his list and sees number one which reads—the left elbow. He tells Smith to touch Jones on the left elbow. This touching is done in the projected state, of course, since both Smith and Jones have been separated physically and could not possibly touch each other physically. Now Jones in his projected form being touched by Smith knows where he has been touched. Since he is conscious in his physical body as well as in his projected form, he tells his assistant to write down after item number 1—the left elbow. This procedure is carried out for the full ten items. Then Jones' assistant brings his list to compare with the list that was read to Smith by his assistant.

The experiment of consciously projecting yourself into space is quite likely an idea that you had not entertained previous to your reading this article. Do not condition it with the expectation of obtaining proof of its validity in the first or second attempt. Much depends upon the latent qualities within yourself. A certain skepticism may prove to be a stumbling block that you may have to remove later. There have been instances in which some people using this technique for the first time have had phenomenal results.

It would be well to regard the

experiment as a newly opened door or access to a new territory. Your acquaintance with it will come through the experience of exploration. When you become accustomed to this new realm and acquaint yourself with its laws, you may then judge its validity and know its true value.

For those who have some knowledge of "astral projection" you will find that the projected astral double has a cable connecting it with the physical body. Also conscious operation in the immediate vicinity of the physical body is difficult and very uneven. Projection of this sort for any length of time draws excessively upon the vital strength.

In direct contrast the projection technique described in this article is more aptly named "Projection of the Mind." There is no apparent connecting cable. One can approach his or her physical body without the conscious mind blanking out in the projected double. The most important item is that this technique permits the experiment to be sustained for considerable lengths of time and distance without any exhausting drain of vital energy. In fact, many people return with a kind of renewed vitality.

Here you have before you a neat little packaged article of an unusual operative formula. How will you use it?

For a good purpose or otherwise. You can learn much. The

correlation of information gained in the next plane with the corresponding facts available on the physical plane will give you an insight of which you never dreamed. You will discover how "time is not." You may find out from whence you came and whither you go. All you have to do is to try it and learn for yourself.

Just one word of advice. At the end of the experiment think of returning to the place where the physical form is and of lying down into it again. This, for a double reason—for the impression that it will make in the full realization of the fact that the conscious mind has the ability to emerge out of the physical form and that the material is not the only vehicle of expression.

IS SPACE FLIGHT POSSIBLE?

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We've heard a lot about Obsession, but do we really know what it is? We say someone is "obsessed" with an idea, for instance, but how can this be? Can a concept such as an "idea" take physical possession of our body, or of our mind? Or is the idea really not ours, but someone else's? Beware the thought that clouds your judgment, drives you to actions not normal to your character! You may be obsessed! That thought is not yours, but the thought of a separate entity, intruding upon your physical existence, to your detriment. How many times have we heard of a murderer who blames his deed on just such an outside thought, even to claiming that he was acting as the instrument of God? In this story we have an unusual concept of obsession, with its focal point embodied in a tiny figurine named Ming Cha or so it seemed!

MING CHA

By

MILTON MANN

I PUSHED through the street door into the dimly lit foyer of the apartment house and squinted at the nameplates beside the pushbuttons until I found the right name. I pushed the button. A few seconds later the inner door buzzed loudly. I pushed it open. Then I climbed three flights of stairs that were so heavily carpeted you could have bounced a bowling ball down them without a whisper of sound. A man stood waiting in the opened door, eyeing

me with frank curiosity. He was maybe thirty-five, medium height and build, a quiet pleasing face with heavy dark beard that would always show as five o'clock shadow right after shaving, even though his face was nut brown from tan.

"You Hugh Brown?" I asked.

He looked at the package under my arm. "Yes," he said. I noticed the tic that quirked the right corner of his mouth when he talked.

He stepped back far enough



for me to enter his apartment. It was in keeping with the stairs, heavily carpeted, wall to wall. The furniture was in good taste and not cheap. My sister-in-law had recently bought a davenport almost like the one here for three hundred and a quarter, and the davenport was typical of the room.

I turned to face Brown. He was taking his hand away from the knob of the closed door. "What do you drink?" he asked. His smile twitched on the right side of his mouth. "I pride myself on my collection. Name it. If I don't have it, I'll have it the next time you come."

That made me like him. Not many people can make you feel welcome, and imply that you will come again and be welcome, in as few words. I grinned. "If you don't have it," I said, "you should be ashamed, after that build-up. I like Bourbon and Seven Up, with ice cubes."

"What brand of Bourbon?" he came back. His eyes suddenly took on a dreamy, speculative look. "I know the flavor," he said. He was silent while the right corner of his mouth twitched slowly. He nodded his head at some inner decision. "I'll make you two drinks. One will be your Bourbon and Seven Up. The other will be neither Bourbon or Seven Up. But I challenge you to tell which is which."

"What will the other be made of?" I asked.

"No harm in telling you," he said. "A blend of rums, white soda, and juices." He went to the wall and touched something, and a whole section of the wall slid back, revealing a small bar. The shelves behind the bar were full, and I noticed that each different bottle in front on each shelf had at least two identical bottles behind it. "You can even watch me," he said, going behind the bar. "I'll use identical glasses and switch them under the counter so you can't tell which is which."

I watched, so fascinated that I forgot temporarily my reason for being here. And to Hugh Brown, I began to realize, being a good

host was more important than anything else. There was something about him . . .

I actually forgot why I had come here until he asked me. "Oh yes," I said with guilty haste. "I haven't even introduced myself, Mr. Brown. I'm Lt. Jack Collins of the Police Department."

"Oh?" he said, his eyes flicking up and down over my figure.

"I picked up the weight after I got on the force," I said. "They don't have any provisions for that, so they promoted me to a desk job to keep my arches from breaking down after I added a hundred pounds." I went over to the davenport, picked up the package I had dropped there, and gave it to him. He held it without opening it, still looking at me questioningly. "You'll recognize it when you open it," I said. "Then I'll talk."

I sipped one of my drinks and watched him while he undid the wrapper. Recognition animated his features when he took off the last wrapping of paper, revealing the little statue. Recognition, then his face cramped with what was unmistakably regret. "So Hank is dead," he said softly.

I WAS satisfied temporarily with his reaction. I turned my gaze from his face to the statue. I knew what to expect, from the letter. It was all that, and more.

It wasn't too much more than a chunk of orange-colored rock, but here and there was intricate carv-

ing, so that the over-all impression it gave was of an Oriental figure of some kind—a jovial potbellied Asiatic with a fat face and bulging cranium. The letter had said it was genuine jade and worth around fifteen thousand dollars and probably older than history.

I got up and went over and took it from his listless hands to look at it closer. The illusion of it being an Oriental vanished with close inspection. Up close it looked like a senseless blob of amber with haphazard areas of finely shaped but uncoordinated carving. It amazed me. It was like an oil painting I had seen once that looked like nothing but blobs of color until you stood about ten feet away, then it became a vividly real portrait of a man sprawled on an old fashioned couch.

Hugh Brown seemed unaware that I had taken the little statue from him. His eyes looked beyond the far wall of the room. Finally his eyes focused again. He looked at me vaguely. "Ready for another drink?" he asked in automatic reflex.

"I haven't finished either of the first two," I said. I sipped at both glasses, and held the second one up. "I think this is the Bourbon," I said.

He shook his head. Then he looked at me sharply. "You're from the police?" he said. He looked at the statue I had just set on the bar. "Then why . . . ?"

"Because—" I began. He held

up his hand to interrupt me.

"I think I understand," he said. "That statue wouldn't come to me unless—Oh, good Lord! I hadn't thought of it! My getting it means that Carl and Bill and Jim are dead, as well as good old Hank. I was—" He got on a queer expression. "—*last* on the list!" He plunked down on one of the bar stools. "And it's only been—how many years? Nineteen forty-four to nineteen fifty-three? Nine years?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you about," I said, looking at the statue. It seemed to look back at me with an innocent joviality. In one little polished spot I could see a reflection of a Creme de Menthe label on a bottle somewhere on the shelves.

Hugh Brown blinked at me, his eyes still far away. Abruptly they were focused on me, then trying to see inside me. The right corner of his mouth continued to twitch in slow, regular tempo. His smooth, tanned features and perpetual five o'clock shadow . . . Suddenly I was quite sure he could shoot a man without it bothering him overly much. But Hank Smith had not been shot.

I could almost see his mind grasp the last of the puzzle on my being here. I was police. Hank Smith was dead. Hank Smith was murdered. Everyone was suspect. He, Hugh Brown, was suspect. I could see the thousand and one questions pop into his mind—and get pushed

back. His eyes flicked toward the statue and back to me. Abruptly he relaxed. In perhaps three seconds he had completely sized up the situation and its major implications and decided upon his tactics. The right side of his mouth had twitched perhaps three times, its rhythm undisturbed by the speeded up action of the mind behind that smooth tanned brow.

"Of course," he said. "Ask me anything you like. I'll be glad to help you."

It was my turn to be subtle. "Actually," I said, "it's more curiosity than anything else. Smith left a will. He didn't have much other than this statue. In the will he was most emphatic about you getting this statue after he died—at any cost. I think the exact words of the will were, 'the balance of my estate to be used to locate and place in the hands of Hugh Brown . . . ' The strange part about that is that he had the will made out the same day he himself received the statue—almost as though he expected at any moment . . ."

"To be killed?" Brown asked. He shook his head. "That wasn't the reason. It was his obligation under oath, and naturally any of us can expect to go at any moment. Two seconds from now, for example, the Russians could drop their first atom bomb on us. I should—" A bewildered expression flashed across his face.

"Make out a will today?" I said.

"Who are you going to leave the statue to?"

He smiled, but remained silent. I decided the time had come to plunge.

"You were right when you said that four men have died with this statue in their possession," I said. "Carl Johnson was first. A negro living in Memphis. Bill Foster, a used car salesman in Seattle was second. In a way he was lucky to get it. Johnson had mentioned to an aunt once that if anything happened to him Foster was to get the statue. She found Foster's address on a letter and mailed the statue to him a couple of months after Johnson died. Foster had the statue only six months when he died. He had been living at home. He kept the statue in his room. His mother had never liked the statue, and got rid of it the day after Bill died. Of course she followed her son's wishes and mailed it to Jim Wright, an electronics technician at an aircraft plant in Los Angeles. Wright had the statue for three years before he died. Then Henry Smith got it. Smith owned a chain of restaurants in Colorado and lived in Denver."

Hugh Brown smiled. "I see what you're driving at," he said. "I can save you the trouble. We five were together in the China-Burma-India theater during World War II." He chuckled at my mixture of expressions and asked, "Can't I fix you another drink?"

"No thanks," I said. "I need

what few brains I have right at the moment. A war connection among you hadn't occurred to me. Tell me about it."

"IT was in Yunnan Province," Hugh Brown said. His lips quirked into a smile and the right corner of his mouth twitched twice, rapidly. "We were what you might call freight unloaders on a cargo plane that made regular trips over the hump. The plane didn't land on the China side. We dumped the cargo from the air, generally, to the Chinese troops, fighting the Japs.

"On this particular day we were spotted by a Zero. It was rough weather, and we had lost our fighter escort and were a push-over. We got orders to bail out even before the Zero reached us. There were seven of us, but only the five of us got down okay. We found the other two, their bodies riddled with machine gun bullets from the Zero. Then we started in the general direction of the Burma Road, which was to the south. No idea where we were, really. Never did know. We were well armed, of course, and with enough food to last a few days.

"We had been going for two days when we saw the Jap. He was alone. Probably a scout out searching for parties of Chinese in the surrounding hills. We saw him first, but then he saw us. I think it was Carl Johnson who winged him. In fact, I'm sure of it.

We trailed him for almost a mile, spread out so he couldn't circle behind us.

"Finally he holed up inside the entrance to a cave in the side of a hill. He took potshots at us from there. Bill and Jim and Hank kept his attention while Carl circled in from the right, and I from the left. I got there first. I jumped out in front of the entrance with a loud shout that I felt would confuse him long enough for me to get him. Sure enough, he exposed himself as he tried to get back from the entrance into a deeper part of the cave. I pumped bullets in there like mad, even after I saw him go down.

"The others came up then, and we all went inside, partly to make sure we'd got him, partly to see what was in the cave, if anything. It turned out to be some sort of sacred temple inside. There was a fat fellow sitting on the floor against one wall with his short legs crossed under him and his belly resting on his lap. Looked like a living Buddha. Around him and in back of him along the wall were all sorts of trinkets. Prayer wheels and things like that. In a niche in the wall directly above him was this statue—only we did not notice it right then.

"The holy man was hit. Several times. I had sprayed that cave good. Three holes in his huge bloated belly and two in his chest. He was still alive though, and I doubt that he had moved from the

time the Jap went in. He didn't even move when he died, which was a few minutes later.

"He looked up at us. When he saw we weren't going to attack him he smiled with his fat lips. Then he pointed with a fat, extremely short arm and hand to one of the prayer wheels. Jim Wright picked it up and put it in the guy's hand. He spun the prayer wheel several times, muttering in Chinese. Then he lifted his left arm over his head with one finger pointed behind him. It was then we saw this statue. It seemed to be shining with a light of its own.

"When we looked down again the fat boy was dead, but he was still sitting there. Well, we decided to eat lunch and push on. The cave was as good a place as any. While we ate we kept looking up at the little jade figure. The more we looked at it the more we wanted it. Each of us wanted it, and none of us wanted anything else in the cave. Finally we agreed we all owned it, more or less. We drew straws to see who would get the custody of it first. Five straws of five different lengths. I held them while Bill Foster drew. He got the next to the shortest. Then Bill held them while the rest of us drew. Strangely enough, Carl didn't have to draw. He waited until last, and the shortest straw was all that was left then. And we agreed on a plan. Carl made out a will right there in the cave, leaving the statue to

Bill Foster. Bill agreed that when he died it would go to Jim Wright. Jim would will it to Hank Smith the minute he got it. Hank would will it to me the same day he got it."

"You made all these decisions right there in the cave in the presence of the dead holy man?" I asked. "It seems to me you were unconsciously going on the assumption that whoever had the statue at any time would die before his heir to it would, weren't you?"

Hugh Brown looked at me, his eyes going wide. The right corner of his mouth twitched twice in rapid succession. "You know," he said, "I hadn't thought of that before, but now that I do I recall that it seemed natural to think that. I don't know why. And the way it's turned out . . ." The corner of his mouth literally jerked with excitement.

"You say they were murdered?" he asked.

"Possibly," I hedged. "The only one we know about first hand is Henry Smith. If he was murdered, and the evidence points to it, it was with a poison that is unknown to medical science. There's plenty of evidence that it wasn't a natural death. Practically every fine blood vessel in his skin was ruptured, leaving a lacework of red and bluish lines. The autopsy showed that his brain was similarly affected. Whatever it was, it acted fast. He had left one of his

Denver restaurants half an hour before his sister walked into his apartment and found him already dead. In the restaurant he had seemed in perfect health. It had taken him no more than ten minutes to get to his apartment. So he died during the twenty minutes."

"But the poison could have been administered any time before that, of course?" Hugh Brown suggested. He leaned forward. "I'm beginning to get the picture. After the war some Oriental devoted his life to finding that jade statue. Each time he traced it down someone sent it to the next man before he could get it. Now that I think of it, there were plenty of little passages leading off from that cave. We didn't explore any of them. Some disciple of the holy man could have been lurking in the darkness and watching us. Afraid of us, since we were armed."

"That's one possibility," I said. "Which brings us up to the present. You realize, of course, that as a detective I can draw only two conclusions. Either you murdered all four men in order to get possession of that little statue, or your own life is in danger. I've managed to satisfy myself that you were right here in town when Smith died, so I don't think you had anything to do with his death. That means . . ."

"Yes, I see that," Hugh Brown said. He turned his eyes away from

me and let his gaze wander about the luxurious room. I sensed, abruptly, how attached to his apartment he was. The prospect of possible death meant to him first of all that he would no longer live in these surroundings. But another part of his agile mind was also at work. He turned his attention back to me suddenly. For a long second his mouth didn't twitch at all. "It would be impossible to place a police bodyguard on me twenty-four hours a day forever," he said. "Are you married, Lt. Collins?" I shook my head. "Then why don't you move in with me? I have two spare bedrooms. Look here—I have plenty of money. Consider your rent and food bill and any entertaining you wish to do as a salary for keeping an eye on things. Don't consider it a responsibility and don't let it interfere in the slightest with your regular duties and social life. I mean it."

I looked away from him, toward the shapeless blob of jade that gave the impression of being a very fat jolly Oriental. A tingle of superstitious dread went through me like a wave. *Hugh Brown had not even thought of the most natural and obvious alternative—getting rid of the statue!*

At least that was what I concluded at that moment. Later I was to conclude that not only had he thought of it at once, but he had gone far ahead of me in his thinking. At that moment, how-

ever, I merely considered and rejected pointing out the obvious to him. I wanted to solve those four mysterious deaths.

He sat erect on a bar stool, his alert eyes waiting for my answer, the right corner of his mouth twitching slowly, a picture of quiet, civilized, well adjusted manhood.

I grinned. "It's a deal," I said.

For a moment conscience fought with me.

"We'd better pick up your things," Hugh Brown said. "Do you have much to move?"

"I—I'll just pack a few clothes and bring them over," I said.

"Nonsense. You live alone? Then why pay rent on the place. I assure you I'm not going to boot you out even if you wound up this case involving me tomorrow. Come and look at your room. It has its own bathroom."

I looked at the room. It was quite large—twelve by fourteen. The bathroom was ultra modern, the tub far better adapted to my corpulence than the one down the hall at the rooming house where I had lived for the past three years.

"I'll have a private phone installed for you in the morning," Brown said. "What time do you usually go to work? I'll have the woman that comes in fix breakfast for you every morning at whatever time you say."

"But—I'll have to give notice," I said limply.

"Nonsense. Since this won't be

costing you, you can afford to forget the week's or month's rent you've already paid out. If some vengeance-bent Oriental is liable to show up here at any moment and try to poison me you should be on hand."

Brown stood there, the corner of his mouth twitching mildly, radiating an aura of friendly but inexorable psychological pressure. I suddenly realized that my only valid objection lay in my own unwillingness to make such a major decision so rapidly and so casually.

"Okay," I gave in.

"Fine. We'll take my car. It has an enormous trunk compartment."

Brown led the way out into the hall. Instead of taking the stairs he went down the hall to an elevator. My last mental objection vanished. Especially when the elevator went down to the basement and the doors opened into a large garage area. "You can keep your car down here," he said. "Each apartment has two garage stalls. You can have stall nine over there."

During the ten minute drive to the rooming house I grew more unhappy. I liked where I lived. I liked the people. I brushed these objections aside. I could always drop back and visit. I would explain that an important case required the move.

Brown sat behind the wheel, a quietly efficient human machine, with a mind that darted in to

basic reasoning and made decisions with little or no emotional upheaval. He made me feel a little inferior, but in a way that was good. I *had* been rather lonely, living alone.

TWO hours later I was finally alone in my room, putting shirts in the roomy drawers of a sliding door closet that could be opened either from my room or my bathroom. My radio-phono-tv would come in tomorrow, but otherwise I was completely moved. I was feeling better about the move. This place had been designed intelligently for functional living. Even the drawers would pull out on the bathroom end as well as the bedroom end.

"Yes," I decided with a tired sigh as I finished the last of my unpacking, "this would really be comfortable living."

It was then that a discreet knock sounded at the door. I went and opened it. Hugh Brown stood there. The jade statue was in his hand. He smiled apologetically, the corner of his mouth twitching slowly.

"You know," he said, "I got to thinking that since this little thing seems to be the focus of a lot of trouble, maybe you'd better have it in with you. Don't worry about my holding you responsible for it though. I won't. I just think it will simplify things if you take care of it."

"You're probably right," I said.

"Okay, I'll set it on that little table over by the window." I took it from his hand and went over to the table and put it down. The translucent jade face in the statue beamed up at me with intensely jovial friendliness.

"Good night, Lt. Collins," Hugh Brown said from the doorway. I turned and nodded. He closed the door softly.

I was alone. Something bothered me and made me feel uneasy. It wasn't until much later that I was to know what it was. The jade statue had been sent to me by the Denver police. Hank Smith had had it. Now, in effect, I had it. Hugh Brown had stepped aside into the role of observer so subtly and so skillfully that I hadn't realized it.

Four men had possessed this little statue—and died. Now—I was *it* . . .

But I didn't realize this. Instead, I beamed at the little fat Oriental jade. It was far fatter than I, but our mutual fatness was a bond of kinship.

Suddenly I remembered some friends who had had a cockateel they called Ming Cha. It was perhaps the only Oriental sounding name I knew, so I decided to call the statue by that name.

"Hi, Ming Cha," I said softly.

The fat beaming face of the jade seemed to dip several times in eagerly friendly response. Or was it some trick of refraction of the lights in the room?

I slept that night with my police revolver under my pillow—something I had never done before in my life. The first time! Yet it was to become a habit I dared not break—until the day I became *afraid to have it within reach while I was asleep.*

AS the days passed I became used to the total absence of outside noise from my room. I grew to look forward to luxurious baths, a liquor cabinet in my own room with bottles that somehow never became empty, and a small refrigerator built into it that always had snacks and cold cuts and a couple of quarts of milk and a few hard boiled eggs. I delighted in being able to toss dirty shirts and sox into a hamper without ever having to wonder what became of them.

On Thursday evenings Hugh and I played chess. Fairly often he had guests. I met a few of them, but for the most part I stayed aloof from them.

More and more I grew to love my room, love being in it when I wasn't at work, love being alone, except for Ming Cha. Ming Cha. He lived on the gleaming top of the liquor cabinet now, right next to my radio-phono-tv. When I came in in the evening he would beam in delight, seeming to bow toward me many times, rapidly, as I crossed the room to stand before him. While he bowed his fat body seemed to quiver and

dance with delight at my being home.

It was, of course, only the reflection and refraction of light in the jade. And the personality he seemed to develop was of course merely the workings of my imagination. Living alone as I did in effect, it was natural to make him into a companion. Or so I believed.

I had never "talked to myself" when alone, and I didn't start now. But I developed a habit of sitting so I could look at Ming Cha when I did my thinking. I found that it helped.

There was the Martha Beemis case I was assigned to a few weeks after I moved in. Quite a puzzler. For two weeks I was up against a blank wall. My mind couldn't let go of it even in the privacy of my room, so I would sit and look at Ming Cha and think. Subtly my thinking separated into two parts, each discussing the case from different viewpoints, and one of them seeming to be Ming Cha. It was Ming Cha who solved that case. Lt. Jack Collins was a name played up big in the papers over it. My "brilliant deductions" blew the case wide open. I grinned at the reporters and posed for pictures, and one part of my mind thought what an aid to concentration that chunk of jade was developing into—like a crystal ball. Another part of my mind firmly believed that I had solved nothing at all, that it had been Ming Cha who broke the case. And I didn't dispute this. It

was a happy make-believe. But I noticed that my respect for Ming Cha was growing into something quite real.

My only annoyance was the fact that I was putting on more weight. The inexhaustible supply of snacks that I kept at almost unconsciously, the luxurious living.

Three months after I had moved into the apartment the Czenko case was dropped in my lap. Czenko was a reporter for the Blade. He had been brutally murdered and disfigured. Two hours after the Chief gave me the case I received a telephone warning to lay off or I would get the same treatment. The warning was a mistake, because I recognized the owner of the voice in spite of his attempts to disguise the tones. It was Mike Lantro, brother of Four-fingers Lantro who ran just about everything in the third ward. I went after him and had to shoot him. He died two days later in City Hospital.

The night after Mike died some of Four-fingers' boys took me for a ride. The way it began, I was in my room. I didn't hear the door chimes. Hugh Brown let them in and got sapped right in the doorway. The first I knew about it my door was thrown open and I was looking at two guns pointed at my fat middle. Strangely, instead of being afraid I thought of the fat Buddhist monk sitting in the cave, three slugs in his stomach and two in his chest, while he smiled and

rotated a prayer wheel. Other thoughts flashed through my mind too—of Japanese butterball fighters so skilled they could parry a knife with one finger and not get cut. I felt a surge of complete confidence that I could equal them.

I allowed the hoods to disarm me. As they ordered me toward the door I turned and winked at Ming Cha. He was shaking with mirth. It was funny, these stupid Occidental fools. I felt a cold chill of anger when I saw Hugh lying on the floor by the hall door. The anger quickly merged with my mirth. I chuckled all the time during the ride through town and out into the country. The two mugs sitting on either side of me in the back seat of the car began to sweat after a while and started pleading with Four-fingers who sat in the front seat beside the driver to let them give it to me now. He was cautious. He wanted to wait until they reached a lonely road where they could give it to me and dump me without being interrupted with a body on their hands.

When it came it all happened in the space of two heartbeats. Each time I let the hood trying to kill me actually pull the trigger before reaching out and deflecting his aim so another hood got the bullet. When it was over I pulled Four-fingers and his driver over the back of the front seat and got behind the wheel and drove to the police garage under the County-City Building.

I couldn't stop chuckling inside of me. At first the reporters wouldn't believe my version of the shootings. Ballistics backed me up though. And Hugh had recovered consciousness and phoned the police twenty minutes before I came in.

When I left for home about midnight there were already Extras on the street, with my picture two columns wide right in the center. Hugh was waiting for me with a drink. I traded him the newspaper for the drink and watched him while he read about it.

His lips were a straight line, marred only by the slow twitching at its right corner. Two lines creased between his brows. He nodded now and then at some statement as he read.

When he finished reading he half looked up and became motionless, his twitch slowed down just a trifle. It was his habitual pose while thinking or making up his mind. Usually it was followed by decision, signalled by two rapid twitches, a clearing of his throat, and some statement, usually in a dryly humorous vein. But this time it was only the barest of pauses. Then he handed back the paper and picked up his own drink. "Quite a write-up," he said just before he raised his glass to his lips.

Something cold shot into me, quenching the mirth that had been bubbling. A cold premonition. I looked at him, so nonchalantly sipping, his expression concealed by

the glass. A thousand words formed on my tongue in rapid succession. I bit them all off, unsaid.

"I'm weary" I sighed. "Think I'll go to bed." He merely nodded. I stood up and padded toward my door, conscious of his eyes boring into my back. I was quite sure he hadn't suspected my sensing the change in him.

In my room I smiled tiredly at Ming Cha. For once he wasn't laughing and bowing in greeting. He was tired too.

I sat and consumed almost a half-pint jar of cheese spread on thin crackers, fighting the growing dread within me.

Hugh was going to take Ming Cha away from me. I knew it as certainly as I had ever known anything in my life. Maybe he was going to do even more. Maybe he was going to destroy Ming Cha.

I could see him now, sitting out there in the living room, that eternal twitch working, his mechanical, soulless brain clicking away while the twitch kept time. He didn't say much. He never said much. Instead, he put things away in his mind until they piled up, then he patiently put them together, looked at them, then twitched twice in rapid succession. That double twitch cocked him like a gun. After that double twitch he was always ready to act without any more thinking and without any emotion.

But I'd kill him before I'd let him take Ming Cha away from me.

The case wasn't cleared up yet. He couldn't yank me off with a double twitch and some polite words. Shaking with anger, I took my gun out of my shoulder holster.

"Oh, hell," I snorted at myself. "Go to bed." I snorted again at my absurd, wrought up thoughts of the moment before. I had killed four men since dinner time. That was enough to make anyone screwy. Hugh had no intention of changing the status quo. If he ever decided to he would discuss it with me first, be open to suggestion. That was the way he was built. *I had nothing to fear.*

I took off my clothes and soaked in a hot tub for half an hour, then went back into the bedroom and put on my pajamas. I took my gun out of its holster and put it under my pillow like I always did, turned out the ceiling lights, and climbed into bed. It was almost two o'clock.

I reached up and turned off the bedlamp. I sighed deeply in the darkness . . .

I WAS drowning. Air was bursting in my lungs. With my right hand I gripped the rope that had been dropped to me from a boat. The rope went up and up into the water above me, and the boat was up there someplace, but I couldn't get free of the seaweeds that were wrapped around my ankles. With my left hand I was trying desperately to free my legs. A fish swam by in front of me. It

was translucent as though made of jade, and its eyes were large and very sad. I tried again with my last ounce of strength to free my legs, but the seaweed had a life of its own and wrapped itself tightly again as quickly as I pulled it loose.

I went berserk in a paroxysm of bursting lungs and terrible fear of impending death—the room was dark and I was trying to unlock the door with my left hand. In my right I gripped my gun. I had just been panting and sobbing.

I flicked the switch beside the door. Light flooded my room. I had been trying to get out. I must have gotten out of bed in my sleep and walked over to the door. With the gun in my hand.

Had there been a noise? Had I heard noises outside my room, and only half awake, taken my gun and tried to get out where the trouble was? Of course that was it! Cursing my stupidity, I turned off the lights and silently unlocked the door. I inched it open, alert for the slightest sound. The rest of the apartment was dark and silent. From the direction of Hugh's room came soft breathing, deep and regular.

My door—a noise would have to be very loud for it to penetrate. Any noise that I could hear would have awakened Hugh—with his door slightly ajar as he always kept it while asleep.

I pulled my head back into the room and closed the door and

locked it. The noise must have come from right in my room—or my bathroom. I stood there in the dark imagining all sorts of shadowy threats until it occurred to me that if there were a threat it would have materialized long before this. I grunted my annoyance and turned on the lights again.

I held my gun up and looked at it, frowning. I had reached under my pillow in my sleep and gotten it, then gotten out of bed and gone across to the door and tried to get out. In my sleep I hadn't been able to work the knob that slid the bolt. Even awake sometimes it didn't turn just right and I had to work it again.

Why would I do a thing like this? I'd never walked in my sleep in my life! But then, I had never killed four men in as many seconds before in my life—or in one month even, let alone after dinner and before going to bed! Maybe that accounted for my strange behavior. In my sleep I must have been living it over again. Sure, that was it. I must have dreamed they were coming into the apartment and attacking Hugh, and I got out of bed to go to his rescue. If the locked door hadn't stopped me and woke me up I would have gone dashing into the living room to the rescue before waking up.

I turned on the bedlamp and automatically started to put the gun under the pillow again. I hesitated, then snorted. It wasn't likely I would pull that stunt

again! I put it under the pillow and went back to the door and turned off the ceiling lights.

With only the dim illumination from the bedlamp I went to the liquor cabinet and fixed a highball. Ming Cha seemed asleep. Of course it was only the lack of bright light, but the surface of the little statue seemed almost black, absorbing rather than reflecting what little light there was. In my mind's eye I imagined a little point of sunlike brilliance deep within the blob of stone, slightly feeble but still brighter than a dozen suns, drinking up every drop of radiance impinging on the statue, replenishing its energy.

That wasn't so far fetched, I decided as I drank and let the ice cool my lips. I'd heard of stone that absorbed sunlight and released it in the dark. I finished my drink and glanced at my watch before getting into bed. It was four thirty. The sun would be coming up soon. I turned off the bedlamp.

In the darkness I tried to go back to sleep. I could feel the alcohol spreading through my body. Instead of relaxing me it seemed to irritate my flesh, make it restless. My thoughts returned again and again to my sleepwalking. Why had I gone to the door with my gun in my sleep? Would I do it again? I ought to put my gun someplace where it would wake me up to get it. In a drawer under some shirts maybe...

I blinked my eyes in surprise. I hadn't been conscious of falling asleep. And yet now I was out of bed, halfway across the room toward the door. The faint light of dawn was spread softly through the room. In my right hand was my gun—and I knew what I had been going to do!

I dropped it as though it were red hot. It thudded soundlessly against the thick rug. A feeling of revulsion toward it flooded into me. *I had been going to kill Hugh with it!*

I looked at my watch. It was six thirty. One hour before I usually got up. By an effort of will I started going through my normal morning routine of a shower, shaving, dressing. I forced myself to hum an off-key melody as I dressed. I forced my thoughts into the usual channels that would warm up my brain cells for the day's work. My last act before leaving my room was to pick up my revolver and place it under my arm in my shoulder holster. In the kitchen Mrs. Blodgett hadn't arrived yet. I left her a note and went out into the hall to the elevator. On the way down town I stopped the car at a drive-in and had breakfast.

My gun was a hot thing pressing against my ribs under my coat.

IT was a busy day, what with reporters, telling the details of the shootings to a dozen different people including the Mayor who

had to get in on the publicity. My immediate superior, Captain Walker, was the only one who raised any question. He did it in private.

"I don't know how you worked it, Jack," he said when we were alone in his office for a few minutes, "but are you sure a desire for publicity didn't enter into it. Don't get me wrong, but it seems at least one of those punks could have been taken alive."

I got mad and called him a few choice names. He waited until I ran out of breath, but his eyes got madder and madder. "It looks to me like you didn't want any survivors to be witnesses to what you did," he said. "I don't think you can move as fast as you claim you did. You're too fat."

I looked at him without speaking. He stood up under my stare, but he turned pale. Finally he was trying to turn his eyes away, and couldn't. He began to sweat. Finally he said, "I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't know what I was saying. I didn't mean it."

I began to chuckle. It was funny, seeing Walker turn yellow. I'd seen him under fire and he didn't have a nerve in his body. But now he was afraid of *me*! My chuckle spread to my whole body until I was literally quivering with mirth. He was afraid of me, and he should be. As long as he stayed that way I could trust him—afford to be magnanimous toward him. I felt my friendly feeling radiate outward toward him, encompass him.

He trembled visibly, his face bloodless, his eyes wide with terror. But it didn't matter. He was harmless to me now. Still chuckling, I turned my back on him and left his office.

My good humor remained with me. It was there when I went home that night. I radiated good nature toward Hugh Brown. He regarded me with friendly, thoughtful eyes. It was Thursday evening. We played our games of chess.

When I retired to my room for the night I took my gun and hid it in one of the lower drawers in the closet. Ming Cha watched me with dancing eyes and shaking belly. We were a lot alike, Ming Cha and I, I reflected. Maybe that was why we got along so well together. But just before I dozed off it seemed to me on thinking back that his mirth as he watched me hide my gun had had a bit of mockery in it.

I slept the sleep of the dead. I awoke refreshed. Unquenchable good humor still bubbled through me. I luxuriated in my hot bath. I hummed as I shaved. I slid back the doors of the clothes closet and pulled open a shirt drawer to get a clean shirt. I paused, frowning. For the first time since I began to live here I found signs of carelessness. The piles of shirts were mixed up and messy. I straightened them a little and took out a shirt, then closed the drawer.

Suddenly I thought of my gun. I opened that drawer. My hand darted under the pile of shorts

where I had hidden it. It was still there. I took it out and smelled of it. The only thing my nostrils detected was the clean odor of gun oil. I snorted, asking myself what else I had expected to detect.

Hugh was up when I went into the kitchen for breakfast. He usually didn't show that early in the morning. We talked about world events. I noticed that there was a hawkish slant to his expression this morning. Several times he looked at me, his mouth giving that characteristic double twitch that usually spoke of a decision made. But each time he looked away or began talking about something. I was amused. I bubbled with laughter.

Afterward I nosed my car through the heavy morning traffic, and this bustling Occidental world seemed very good. I enjoyed it immensely. It was a stimulating challenge to me. It was good to be alive and full of health and comfortably fat.

The day passed without event. When I returned home after dinner and let myself into the apartment, Hugh wasn't there. I went to my room.

When I opened my door and switched on the ceiling lights, Ming Cha greeted me with his eternal bowing and shaking good humor. My own smile, I knew, was almost identical with his. My corpulence matched his. My inner mirth was as his. I went over and stood looking down at him.

Then, suddenly, I noticed that he had been moved slightly. Not much, but enough so that I was sure. Someone had been here and picked him up. The cleaning woman? No. For some reason she had never so much as touched him. She was afraid of him. So it couldn't be her.

Had the mysterious murderer of Johnson, Foster, Wright, and Smith finally caught up with the jade statue? It was very possible. The only thing wrong with that line of reasoning was that if it were the murderer he would have simply made off with the statue. Unless I had surprised him when I came in.

I took out my gun and swiftly searched the apartment. No one else was here. When I came back and stood looking down at Ming Cha I knew there was only one thing that could have happened. Hugh Brown had been in my room and picked up Ming Cha.

Hugh Brown. In my mind's eye I could see him, standing here in the same spot where I was now standing, holding the jade statue in his hands, studying it while the right corner of his mouth twitched its mechanical rhythm.

For a hundred lifetimes the jade statue had been safe from all harm. For thirty centuries it had been protected against all harm. Now it was in danger. A tiger was stalking it. Silent. Not roaring like a lion. A tiger, on silent padded feet, mouth twitching at the scent

of prey, but with no slightest whisper of sound. Eyes watching while the mind behind them waited for the right moment. It had been here and was gone. But it would be back.

I WAITED in the darkness of the living room for him to come. At last I heard the grating of the key in the lock of the hall door. He had come.

The door opened. The light from the hall silhouetted his figure as he stepped in and felt for the light switch. The overhead lights flooded the room, blinding me for a brief second. But he had not seen me yet. My eyes adjusted quickly. My gun was pointed at him. He took two steps, then saw me and stopped short.

The right corner of his mouth twitched. He smiled. "You startled me," he said. He looked down at the gun and lifted one eyebrow. "Expecting someone?" he asked quietly, taking off his topcoat.

"Yes," I said. "You."

"Oh?" Hugh said. "Mind if I pour myself a drink? I've had quite an evening, Jack." He started toward me and the panel concealing his elaborate liquor collection and bar.

"Stay where you are," I said. He stopped, his eyes questioning me, his mouth for once not twitching. "You were in my room today," I said. "You picked up the jade statue."

He smiled and his mouth

twitched. "Yes!" he said. "How did you know? By the way, I've been going to ask you—"

"Shut up," I said. "I'm doing the talking. There's no use fooling around any more, playing cat and mouse. You didn't think I knew? Did you? You're not going to get a chance to destroy Ming Cha."

"Ming Cha?" Hugh said, blinking. "Oh. You mean the Chinese jade? Don't be foolish. That thing is worth ten thousand dollars."

"You had it appraised?" I sneered. "When? Today?"

His mouth twitched three times rapidly. Irritation. "As a matter of fact, yes," he said.

I nodded. "I was right," I said. "Selling it is as bad as destroying it. You want to take it away from me."

"As a matter of fact," he said, his mouth twitching rapidly as he talked, "that wasn't the reason I had it appraised. I wanted an expert's opinion on its period—how old it is. He was quite excit—"

"You're a liar," I said. "All along you've been playing me for a sucker. Your game's up now. I'm going to have to kill you."

His eyes flicked down to the gun and back up to my face. "Yes," he said. "I can see that. You're going to have to kill me. But how do you expect to get away with it?"

I chuckled. "I thought you were a burglar," I said.

My eyes flicked toward the hall door. And from the corner of my eye I sensed the movement. As I

turned back, Hugh's topcoat struck my face. I constricted my finger on the trigger at the same time I reached up with my left hand to jerk the coat away.

Something clamped on my wrist and hand. Even as I recognized the standard judo method of disarming a man the gun left my hand. And the coat left my face. But Hugh was standing in the center of the room with my own revolver trained on me. His face was lean and expressionless, but the corner of his mouth twitched at a slightly faster tempo than normally.

"Back up, Jack," he said. "Don't try anything or I'll let you have it."

"Three slugs in the guts?" I said. "Just like you did back in that cave?"

His mouth twitched twice rapidly. "Strange that you should put it that way," he said. "Or maybe not so strange. Walk backward toward your door. Ming Cha, as you call that little statue, might as well be a witness to this."

I backed slowly, watching for the slightest opportunity to turn the tables.

"Do you *remember* getting those three slugs in the belly?" Hugh asked, his eyes penetrating and alert for any sudden move on my part.

The question jolted me. For just an instant I did remember. But of course it wasn't memory of the actual event. It was just a memory

of a sympathetic injection of myself into the role of the Monk in the cave when he got shot. I sneered at him. That had been an obvious psychological trick.

I had reached my door. "Keep backing up," he said. "I'll open your door for you." He didn't take his eyes off me as he opened the door.

I tensed. My opportunity would come when he tried to get me to go into my room. He wouldn't dare let me out of his sight, and that meant we would have to be within three feet of each other as he made me go through the door. Three feet would be close enough for my faster reflexes.

He looked at me, as though recognizing the danger and pondering the problem. I watched his lips. Suddenly his mouth jerked twice. A second later he leaped through the door into my room.

At once panic struck me. He was going to fire a bullet into Ming Cha! He would have to fire that bullet through me to do it! I leaped to the doorway and through it.

He was standing in the center of the room, the gun pointed at me. His lips twitched and smiled dryly. "Doesn't it strike you as odd, Jack, that you would rather die than let me destroy that piece of jade?" he said. His voice was calm, almost intellectual.

"You're insane, Hugh," I said. "That statue has to be preserved until the murder of Henry Smith is solved. Remember? Isn't that

why I am living here? Isn't that why you gave me the statue to guard?"

"The murder of poor old Hank?" he said. His expression became bitter. "I solved that some time ago."

"You're crazy!" I said. "You would have told me if you had."

"No," he said. "I couldn't tell you, *because you killed him!*"

"I?" I said. "You're—"

"*You!*" Hugh said. "You tried to possess him, but his body couldn't stand the load. It was like crowding a fat man into a thin man's suit of clothes. He literally burst at the seams when you tried the final settling into him. And so did Jim and Bill and even Carl. *You* killed them. But a few occidental lives more or less didn't make any difference to you, did they? Back in China in that cave you had maneuvered us mentally into passing your matrix of jade along in case you didn't succeed. That way sooner or later you would find a body to obsess. And what was a few years to one who has lived almost three thousand years?"

Each word he spoke was a hammer blow inside my head. Each was a key that unlocked something. One part of me recognized that every word was true. A second part of me saw that truth with horror for the first time.

"*Jack* fit, didn't he!" Hugh went on inexorably. "Not quite, at first, but the body was amenable. Slowly you shaped it. Ever so slowly you

tried it out, more and more. He never suspected at all."

As from a great depth in a bottomless sea I groped toward the surface. There was no rope to guide me, but there was no seaweed pulling me down. Invisible currents swirled at me though, sending me in unknown directions so that I was lost. The room spun around me dizzily. I felt myself stagger.

Pure unadulterated fear poured through me, so intense that if it had lasted more than an instant I couldn't have lived. A shot exploded close to my ear. Abruptly a cold sweat oozed out of my pores. It dampened my skin and lay there, growing warm.

I shook my head to clear the sweat out of my eyes. I discovered I was on one knee. How I had gotten that way I couldn't remember. I looked up vaguely. For some reason my eyes went past Hugh to where the little jade statue should be.

Part of it was still there. A fragment. Other fragments were scattered on the rug around the liquor cabinet and tv set.

I turned my eyes back toward Hugh. "What happened?" I said weakly. But even as I asked I knew that deep inside me somewhere I knew everything that had happened.

I was aware that he had tossed my gun into a chair and had rushed to help me get to my feet. But my thoughts were racing back over

the last few months, remembering every little thing, seeing it now in its true light. I had been possessed by—what? A fiend out of hell? It didn't make much difference about the goodness or evil of that spirit that dwelt in the jade statue. It had tried to take my mind and body for its own, dispossess me or at least keep me lulled by a feeling of being somebody I wasn't.

I turned my head to look at the now lifeless chunks of jade and shuddered. The thing was gone. I felt that it was gone permanently. To what dark region of the invisible universe God only knew. But it was gone.

How long had it preyed on the living, enslaving one body after another over the centuries? What black magic had enabled it to hang on to the material plane through that statue?

I thought of Hugh and his four companions stumbling onto that secret cave where no white man had ever been before. The West, spreading over the East, perhaps destroying an ancient culture, but also and unintentionally uncovering the nests of ancient evil.

It was a picture too vast for me to do more than feel. I had been too close to one part of it—almost a victim of it. Later, perhaps, I could think of it more calmly. I could sit back and calmly picture the great cleaning-up job the civilization of the west was doing as it spread its light and its terrible

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the army witnessing the phantoms was not aided, but rather were defeated by the influential appearance. Not only was the appearance more than visionary, but actual death resulted from it. Especially is this true in the Bowmen of Mons visitation. Here both sides saw the phantoms, and later, on the battlefield, many German soldiers were found dead without a mark on them? Could so many have died merely of fright at a ghostly appearance in the sky? Are the Germans such "softies"? The answer seems to be no. The conclusion then must be that something else but a desire to win was the cause of the apparitions.

Another factor to be considered is that in all these visitations, the battle was a very important and decisive one. There was real purpose behind the appearance of the phantoms, and the objective achieved can be reckoned in the light of subsequent events. The importance to the Christian world of Constantine's vision and the appearance throughout his campaign of the sign of the cross in the sky before his warriors to inspire them, cannot be underestimated. It is probably true that if Constantine had been defeated, there would be no Christian world today. There is the story of Washington's vision of a future war in which America is in great danger, and that assistance would come from God. There is also the story that Washington was guarded by phantom soldiers

who saved his life on repeated occasions, and enabled the great general and father of our country to overcome impossible odds. Perhaps today there would be no United States, leader of the free world, had it not been for the phantom influences which bore Washington up in his greatest hours of trial.

Taking all this into consideration, there is evidence of *purpose* here, and the obvious question is: whose purpose? In order to answer this, we must first determine whether or not there are such things as etheric armies. And if so, why are there such armies?

After death, most people believe, there is either heaven or hell. In heaven you enjoy eternal bliss, and in hell eternal damnation. If either is true, there cannot be etheric armies. There is no fighting force in heaven where all is peace and bliss; and in hell you are too busy suffering to go about organizing an army, and even if you organized one, you would not be permitted to leave hell to campaign on earth. There must be, then, some other type of existence.

We know, those of us who have investigated thoroughly, that there is life after death, a continuance of existence. At least we can be sure there is *another* form of existence. It is almost unthinkable to believe that historians, so positive about Constantine's "sign," witnessed for *months* by his fighting *millions*, could have been able to conjure the whole thing up

without a denial from those who could say "I was there." In short, it must have happened. And if it did, then there is some other plane of existence. However, such things as these are the source of eternal argument, and resolve nothing. With our hindsight, and our "science," we can ascribe this event to many things, such as mass hallucination, mass hypnotism, atmospheric phenomena (a favorite!) and just plain lies.

But today we have a definite proof that there is something else, and no matter how the "experts" desperately try to infer, by sponsoring "authoritative" books, that the flying saucers are from "outer space" and *therefore not from any etheric or supernatural realm*, they cannot substantiate their claim, nor can they scientifically justify the reported performance of many flying saucers in the light of materialistic or (to put it very badly) three-dimensional fact. The flying saucers answer *all* of the requisites for etheric origin, and *none* of the requisites for other-planetary origin.

Once more the "etheric armies" have come to earth. Once more we have repeated reports of "men in uniform" in connection with the new mode of travel of etheric armies, flying saucers instead of horses and the like, and once more they appear in a time of great crisis; perhaps the worst crisis in all the history of mankind. Not only is the fate of Christendom in

the balance, but the fate of all religions, and of all civilizations, and of all cultures. This time the armies have come (and armies they are, for the saucers sighted number in the uncounted thousands, as many as four thousand being seen at *one time*) in advance of the actual conflict. What will happen if conflict does break out is a matter for much conjecture. Perhaps we will see more than just isolated instances of the interference of etheric armies in the affairs of mankind. Perhaps we will see the battle almost completely fought from the etheric, and the armies of man but tools in the hands of the invisible commanders.

Greatest weight is given to this theory by the *fact* that all the governments of the world are today trying desperately to prove a thing that they have not a shred of real evidence to support, that the earth is being visited by beings from other planets—but beings of *flesh and blood*, and not something else. *Why* is it so important to prove it this way, or rather, to swing public opinion and attention in this direction, when it would be easier (and with greater weight of evidence) to swing it to the belief in a supernatural origin? The answer, we believe is because once that belief becomes widespread, the armies of man must fall by the wayside through sheer neglect and futility. No man would be so bold as to believe he could conquer the armies of God. (*Concluded on page 117*)

... LEST YE BE JUDGED

By
**SANANDANA
KUMARA**

A STORY OF PROPHETIC POWER

HUMILITY is the most necessary virtue of those who hold great power. It must be able to withstand attack, remain dominant in the face of greatness. To forget to be humble creates a vacuum in the spirit that must be filled immediately — by the opposites of virtue, the imperfections of character, that humbleness has forced out and kept out. I, who had thought myself impregnable in my humbleness, secure against all attack, saw my defenses crumble and wash away as though they were sand instead of giant granite blocks, felt myself adrift in a storm of frustration, irritation, anger, and irrationality. A cannon behind a bomb-proof wall, secure from the attack of the enemy's most formidable weapons, can be blown

up by a sparrow whose nest of young ones is built in the yawning mouth of the barrel, ready to jam the hurtling shell before it leaves the cannon, and wreck it.

For two weeks I had been on a speaking tour, facing audiences of the hostile, the unbeliever, the fawning, the sincere, the indifferent. I had handled them all, my humbleness standing against the attacks of praise, incredulity, stupidity, smirking superiority, angry argument, and all the human approaches including, occasionally, that most devastating of all—indifference.

My humbleness was a granite foundation, remaining unshaken and uncracked. Until I felt something gritty in the soup in my mouth and took it out. It was a small wire coil, a small fragment

What if you had the gift of prophecy? What would you do with it? How would you use it? What would have to be your prime tenet of behavior in order to be worthy of a gift which has so powerful an influence on the future — because it is a post mortem in reverse? After an event occurs, we can always see what we should have done! But is that thing we should have done a right thing? Can we, as weak humans, be trusted to know the future; or would we cheat on Life? In this story, which is a moving one, the famous mystic Sanandana Kumara, who wrote the beautiful "Assignment to Life" in our previous issue, gives us the only possible answer to the questions we have asked. And it is our belief that only such people as qualify to this answer can possibly receive this most potent of all gifts of the spirit.

of a scouring pad. I quietly laid it, and the bowl of soup, aside. I said nothing about it to the waitress.

From lowered lids I studied the restaurant again. Strange how, a moment before, I had been looking around me fondly at this quaint setting of American rural life. I had thought the teen-age girls at the front counter, in their men's shirts with tails hanging, and jeans, with their bubble gum and grating senseless tittering at everything the pimply-faced lone boy among them said, was a healthy and typical group. Now—reform schools, discipline — Bah! They weren't worth even annihilation. I wished heartily they would leave.

A fly circled my head lazily and lit on the back of my hand. I caught it between two fingers and

crushed it with a napkin. Another came . . .

The waitress had recommended the chicken-fried steak on the dinner. She brought it and went for my coffee. I forced myself to think the steak attractive, to feel hungry instead of nauseated. I ate several bites. It tasted better with catsup. Working up a little enthusiasm, I poured catsup generously. The coffee came. I saw a dark flake floating half submerged in it and fished it out with a spoon after wiping the detergent streaks off the spoon with another napkin. I studied the flake, my suspicions as to its nature forming. I looked behind the counter and found my surmise had been correct. A coffee urn. It had probably not been thoroughly cleaned since it was first installed.

Setting the cup of coffee aside,

I cut another bite of the steak. In my mouth as I chewed it something separated. I pulled it out and saw that it was a short bit of string, one end knotted, the other frayed.

Spitting out the steak, I gripped the edge of the table with my hands, struggling in a dual battle to retain control of my temper and the contents of my stomach.

The juke box exploded into coarse sound — some “western” song being sung by a man who prided himself on his adenoids, accompanied by a band that prided itself on missing the proper notes, the proper beat, mistaking such inaccuracies for genius. The teenage girls laughed louder now so the pimply-faced boy could hear their appreciation of his wit above the “music”. Three flies took over my abandoned steak. The dishwasher came out with a broom and began sweeping around my table, sending a cloud of dust into the air

IN the car I jammed my foot viciously on the gas, finding a partial outlet for my frustration in speed. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the lights that revealed the two out-houses behind the restaurant. “Not even modern plumbing,” I gritted.

Then I hit the hole in the pavement. It was there, suddenly, in the headlights—too late to swerve, though I tried. For a moment I lost control of the car while I

struggled to remain upright. The car left the pavement. There was no ditch, fortunately, and seconds later I was back on the highway.

Steering was difficult. I stopped the car and got out to look. I immediately saw what was wrong. The right front wheel had been knocked badly out of alignment. Getting back into the car, I drove slowly, feeling the tires rubbing away their tread with every revolution.

It was criminal to have such a bad hole unrepaired and unlighted. In my mind a picture built up of lazy natives drawing salaries paid out of my gasoline tax while they didn't get around to fixing such broken places in the pavement. If I refused to pay the gas tax I would be denied gasoline. If I sued the state for the damage to my car no lawyer would handle the case. He would laugh at me for daring to presume the state responsible.

Two miles farther on was a repair garage. The mechanic, a lanky six-footer who chewed tobacco, appraised the damage with calmness.

“Sure bad,” he said. He waited for my comment. When I didn't speak he said casually, “You'll need wheel alignment. That's fifteen bucks. Might need a new tie rod. I'll look that up if you need one, but offhand I'd say it was around seven dollars.”

“How much exactly?” I asked through stiff lips.

He looked at me shrewdly.

"Eight sixty-five," he said. He didn't avoid my baleful eyes. He looked into them calmly. "Of course," he soothed, "you could get quite a ways the way you are. Prices are about the same in the city. But fifteen miles will take enough rubber off your two front tires to make them off balance. Then you'd need two new tires if you like to drive as fast as you must have been going when you hit that chuckhole."

"So you know about that hole?" I said.

He shrugged and turned away. "Must have been a chuckhole," he said.

"Okay," I said, my voice harsh. "Go ahead and fix it."

I strode outside and looked up at the stars to avoid as much as possible of this insane spot that had found out how to destroy my peace of mind. Within me grew a powerful, dominating obsession—to get away from this part of the country as quickly as possible. The garage mechanic might not have put that chuckhole in the pavement, but it amounted to the same thing. He had had enough business from it to know the exact prices of parts without looking them up. And I had noticed that he kept a very large stock of front end parts. And that convenient two miles—just enough distance for the hapless driver to figure out what was wrong and reach a frame of mind that prepared him to "thank his lucky stars" when he saw the gar-

age! Transient business, with local cars knowing and avoiding the hole.

During the two hours I had to wait I built the thing up in my mind to the point where it didn't seem absurd to think the restaurant had been in on it, deliberately mixing segments of scouring pad into the soup, bits of string in the steak batter, flakes of black stuff in the coffee, so that when a customer left the restaurant he would be too blinded by frustrated rage to see the chuckhole.

"She's fixed," the mechanic informed me. "But if I were you I'd let me put in a new king-pin assembly. It would cost twenty-three fifty, but this one could break sometime."

"Sure," I snarled. "Want to put in a new motor too? Sometimes they get a little worn, don't they?"

He blinked mildly. "What I mean is," he said, "that it bent a little from hitting that chuckhole. Sometimes alloys remain soft until they get old, then just a little warping will make them crystalize. After that they'll break from nothing. I've seen it happen."

"No doubt," I said. "How much do I owe you?" I refrained from pointing out the obvious fact that my car was this year's model. What did he mean, old!

I paid him what he asked. He opened his mouth to say something as I snatched my receipt, but evidently changed his mind. He might as well have said it. I was

too wrought up to be a safe driver. My fingers shook from repressed emotions. Clinically I was aware that I should find someplace to relax and regain my habitual calmness. "Sure," I gritted to myself as I backed out of the garage and roared onto the highway. "I should find a nice quiet place where they put kerosene in the whiskey, and try to get drunk!"

The speedometer needle swung rapidly to ninety and held there. I glanced down at the mileage indicator often, watching it add up the numbers that meant I was getting farther and farther from the part of the world that had discovered a flaw in my armor. Fifteen miles, twenty, thirty, thirty-seven and six tenths—sev-nine tenths—

The world became a bewildering chaos of movements and forces that settled into silence. A silence of awry dimensions rationalizing into an awareness that the car was upside down in a ditch. I wasn't hurt, so I climbed out and, with almost insanely calm perspective, went around to the front of the car. The right front wheel was hanging loose with its undercarriage assembly. I wished fervently that I knew what a king-pin was. I suspected the mechanic had left off a few bolts to get more business from me. I remembered the thirty-seven miles. There would be another garage closer—maybe I was going through a chain of strategically spaced garages all

owned by one man.

I thought of my insurance. It would take care of this accident. Or would it? If the kingpin assembly had caused it, that mechanic would tell the insurance man he had warned me. What a simple trap I had walked into. That simple refusal to be gouged had signed away all the responsibility.

I turned away from the car. I would have to phone for a tow truck. A quarter of a mile away I saw lights. From this distance it seemed to be a roadhouse with lighted parking area. I walked along the edge of the pavement toward it. When I got closer I saw it was a private dwelling more in keeping with the luxury of a large city suburb than this backward area I was trapped in. As I walked into the driveway I looked through the large picture windows into a spacious room where at least twenty people were gathered. A party was in progress.

My knock was answered by a flushed host who introduced himself as Jack Bensen. He kept asking what had kept me. He couldn't seem to grasp the fact that I was a motorist in distress. I was forced in by a combination of handshaking and a firm hand on my shoulder. A drink was thrust at me. A tittering young thing with a vacuous mouth filled with bad teeth did the thrusting, spilling some of the liquid on my shirt front and then attempting to wipe it up with

her red nailed fingers while being what she fancied intimately close to me, rolling eyeballs up at me to see the first sign of the kind of reaction she hoped for.

Almost rudely I retreated from her. In a second of inspiration I gulped the cold fluid, not bothering to taste it. It had alcohol in it. That was all it needed.

Before I could lower the glass I was seized by Jack Bensen and was being pulled from one group to another, while he introduced me as John Smith, laughing loudly each time he rolled the name off his tongue as though it were a private joke. My reserved acknowledgement of introductions was met with polite titters and knowing looks. My aside to my host, "Look, Bensen, I've got to get to the phone," was ignored.

"John Smith," my host repeated for the zillionth time. He flashed a toothy leer at me. "John Smith. *John Smith!* Get it?" He laughed, sending an alcoholic spray from his mouth over my face.

I had gotten it the first time and ignored it. My eyes were not shaped right for a John Smith.

His toothy leer remained, but his glittering eyes took on a look that said he understood and would overlook my lack of a sense of humor, and the resounding slap he gave my back was meant only to show me he was a gruff but friendly American welcoming a foreigner as impartially as he would a human being. It was the

heartly slap of a man who wants you to think he doesn't know his own strength. I was supposed to grin admiringly and tell him he didn't know his own strength. But—

Abruptly I changed. The frustration and anger and rage that had been building up within me were abruptly gone as though they had never been. In their place was ice. Cold, clear-blue ice—an emotion. And with it a determination to hurt.

Something about the change had sobered my host enough so that he stepped back. I looked about me, smiling, seeing these people with a clarity of vision I had seldom experienced before.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said, my voice low and calm, but with some quality that stopped conversation all over the room. "Let me introduce myself. My name—shall we say it is John Smith?" I glanced at Jack Bensen, my lips barely smiling. His laugh fell far short of self confidence now. "Or shall we say it is Shigemitsu Ogaki? The blood of the Smiths and the Ogakis of the world course through my veins, in any case. But what is more important, I am a fortune teller. Do you believe in fortune tellers? From your expressions I think not. That is good. I like that. You will be hard to impress. You will think your silly little subterfuges you use to hide your secret minds are secure from me. You will dare me to drag them

out into the open. Why will you dare me? Because you think you are not cowards." I smiled blandly at my host and gave him what I felt was his conception of an oriental bow. "Fate has brought me here tonight. At this moment my car lies overturned in the ditch a quarter of a mile from here. If Mr. Bensen will kindly permit me to phone the garage to get it and place it in repair, I will entertain you with a performance I usually charge many dollars for."

"Why didn't you say you'd had an accident?" Bensen said. "Hell, I'll call my garage and get Joe Wright out here with the wrecker right away. Are you hurt? Maybe I should get the doctor."

"The garage mechanic, yes," I said. "The doctor, no. I am perhaps bruised, but nothing serious physically." I turned to the others. "I would like for you to think while I am getting the mechanic. What dreams have you had? What questions you would like answered? Be ready. Unless you are—afraid!" I smiled into their eyes, daring them. I wanted to hurt, and hurt deeply. I wanted to revenge myself for the wire coil in the soup, the strings in the steak, the chuck-hole in the road, the wreckage of my car, the drunken superiority of my host, the inane vacuity of unsanitary teeth in the face of an aduress. Yes, I knew these people . . .

My host left the room to phone. The others sat or stood and

watched me, not speaking. I strolled over to the bar and poured myself half a water glass of straight whiskey and carefully lowered two ice cubes into it. I sipped it cautiously. It was good, matching my mood. It was smooth and packing a slow punch. I intended to equal it. My host's voice filtered into the silence from the other room as he gave orders over the phone. It was obvious he owned the repair garage that was going to gouge me. I would have to pay for my whiskey, but not before I had exacted my own measure . .

Jack Bensen returned to the room and eagerly informed me the tow truck would be right out.

"Excellent," I said. "And now —" I turned from the bar and faced my audience, my eyes darting from one face to another. "Who will be first?"

"Can you tell my fortune?" a woman asked, half afraid.

"I could," I said. "What do you want me to tell you? That you are going to take a long trip and meet a dark stranger?" I raised my voice above the nervous wave of titters. "Or do you want the truth?"

"Why—" She looked around as though seeking escape. "The—the truth, of course."

"I would rather not," I said rudely. I turned from her. "Who is next?" The audience fell for my trick. Several voiced indignant protests. I gave a resigned shrug. "All right," I said. I turned back to

her. "Don't say I didn't warn you. I'll give you one more chance to back out."

She shook her head. "No. Tell my fortune." She smiled defiantly. "Am I going to be killed in an automobile accident on the way home?" She looked triumphantly around her. It was obvious she was my hostess, even without Jack Bensen's smirk.

"Hardly, Mrs. Bensen," I said. Her consternation proved my surmise had been correct. The interest and respect of my audience rose at once. I saw it on all sides. "I'll give you a third chance to back down," I said. "I do not want to tell you your future!"

"You'd better tell it," Jack Bensen said, his voice studiously dead-ly as only the voice of a man who thinks himself dangerous can become.

Mrs. Bensen laughed nervously. "Wouldn't it be better for me to know the worst than suspect it?" she asked.

"Can you tell the meaning of dreams?" another woman spoke up in an obvious attempt to smooth over an uncomfortable situation. She blinked rapidly, smiling. "My name is Leona Heatherstone, and I had a dream—"

"Let him tell Maggy's fortune," Bensen said harshly, glaring at her, his face flushed in anger, his fists doubled. I wondered if anyone had ever called his bluff. He looked very dangerous—if one ignored or was ignorant of the weak-

nesses in his features.

The room became deathly quiet. Mrs. Bensen was noticeably pale. I reached into her mind, swiftly exploring, deliberately searching for certain things. I entered the sordid mess that was Jack Bensen's mind and coordinated it with hers in my appraisal. So many alternate futures! I looked at the girl with unsanitary teeth. She looked away guiltily.

I turned back to Mrs. Bensen. "Very well," I said. "Please do not interrupt until I have finished, because I have much to tell you, and each statement will be a terrible blow. Can you take it?"

She nodded, not speaking.

"It had better be the truth," Bensen growled.

I had hoped for that. "You will know the truth of much of it," I said, smiling into his eyes. I jerked my eyes back to Mrs. Bensen and said, "You are going to die of cancer within a year. It is already too late for a doctor to do more than confirm that. But, horrible as that seems to you now, you will welcome death when it comes. You see, you are going to kill your husband. He will know that now, of course, and try to prevent you from killing him, so the only way you can do it is by poisoning him. Wounded pride is what will drive you to murder. He doesn't love you. He—"

"Why you" Bensen yelled, leaping toward me.

I eluded his charge, and the

next moment two men had him, holding him back. "Let him speak his piece," one of them growled.

"Yes!" Mrs. Bensen said clearly. "I would like to hear *all* he has to say."

"There isn't much more," I said, smiling. I turned and bowed to the girl with the unsanitary teeth. "He loves you, does he not? I sensed that when I first entered. It was you who played the hostess." I turned back to Mrs. Bensen. "Wounded pride. You are beautiful, though no longer young. To lose him to such a dirty creature is a great blow, is it not?" I ducked the quart soda bottle the girl threw at me. It shattered against the wall, sending foaming liquid over the thirsty wallpaper design.

"That's a lie!" the girl screamed.

"Shut up, Flo," Bensen shouted. "You'll give away—"

I smiled. "You were going to say, 'the whole thing,' Mr. Bensen?" I said.

"No!" he shouted, trying to break free of the two men who held him.

"No," I echoed. "I think not. I have effectively prevented you from carrying out your own plan. You could not divorce your wife because she has given you no grounds. She could get most of your fortune. You planned to murder her to get her out of the way, but now any death she meets other than cancer will be most suspect, will it not? That is the terrible fact you must face. All these

people will know. But for her that knowledge holds no dread, since she is going to die anyway." I let my eyes go from person to person, knowing how conscious they were now of the oriental quality of my eyes—so alien to these little-travelled people. Humility was far removed from me now. I was using a dreadful power to reach in and play upon the basic superstitions, the very real underlying factors that motivated them all. And in my veins flowed ice, corrosive ice. "Suspense," I hissed. "When will she poison you? At breakfast? Perhaps in a drink she fixes for you? Or you could leave her—but you won't dare. That would be desertion, and it wouldn't solve anything. Could you give your mistress the brush-off and ask Maggy for forgiveness? How could you be sure she would mean it if she said she forgave you? And—" Expression was playing across Bensen's features. His eyes darted from his wife to the girl, and back again. I was getting something new. I chuckled. "That makes it perfect, doesn't it," I said. "So you put everything in your wife's name so your lover couldn't put the squeeze on you. Well, well."

I dismissed him from my thoughts and looked around at the scattered splotches of white that were faces. "That takes care of one—or should I say two—fortunes. Maybe I should clear up the third." I turned to the girl. "Your future? I'm sorry to say this will

leave you relatively untouched. Shortly you will meet a man who will marry you. You will be very happy." I turned away from her grateful smile. "Who's next? Who wants their fortune told?"

"My dream," Leona Heatherstone said nervously. "I don't want my fortune told, but you offered to interpret dreams — and certainly my dream is harmless enough."

"Let us hope so," I said. "However, let me warn you, Mrs. Heatherstone. I am going to tell you the truth. I'm not going to lie for you. Before you tell me your dream examine your soul. If it has one spot on it don't tell me your dream. It is better to be a live coward . . ."

Her shudder was artificial as she glanced sidelong at Maggy Bensen. "You aren't very tactful, Mr.—Ogaki?"

"John Smith," I murmured.

"You place me in a position where I am unable to back out without implying I have something to hide—from my husband." She turned shy eyes on the man sitting beside her. I sized him up swiftly. A slow stolid farmer with a double standard viewpoint, but too wrapped up in his farm to bother to be unfaithful to his wife. A type that angers slowly and stays that way.

"You have placed yourself on that spot," I said. "What is your dream?" I held up my hand as she opened her lips. "First, when did you have this dream? That might make a difference."

She pursed her lips and looked at the ceiling. I could see she was half deciding to lie and say it had been years ago.

"Three nights ago," she said abruptly. "I—"

"One more thing," I interrupted her. "I sense that you have a problem. I want to point out something you aren't aware of. You are of two minds. You desire something, and I believe you hope I can resolve your problem in such a way that a decision will be forced upon you. Then you can feel you didn't make the decision yourself. Do you still want to tell me your dream?"

"Of course," she said, smiling. "It's harmless. You'll see. It's just —strange. I was in the house when the dream opened. I wanted to leave the house and go into town for something. Shopping perhaps. I went out the front door. I reached the front steps and looked down, and there was a bull waiting at the bottom of the steps. He was large and fierce, pawing the ground and snorting. Afraid, I ran back into the house. I waited, thinking he would go away, but whenever I looked out the window he was still there. So I decided to sneak out the back door. I went to the back door and looked out. I couldn't see the bull, so I went out and down the steps. Suddenly a big lion was there, snarling at me. I screamed and ran back into the house. And then—"

"I think you had better stop," I said.

"What's the matter?" her husband said, sneering. "Can't you let her tell a simple dream? Or does it stump you?"

"Stump me?" I said, smiling. "No. It is one of the most elementary of dreams. I could complete it for her."

"Then go ahead and complete it," he drawled, still sneering.

"You screamed and ran back into the house," I said, looking at her. "Then you peeked out the window. The lion and the bull didn't see each other, but if they did they might get to fighting and you could get out. Finally the lion did see the bull and started stalking it, but every time you tried to get out they were there, the bull at the front steps, the lion at the back. That's the way the dream ended."

"How did you know?" she said. "That's *exactly* the way it went!" Her husband blinked at me in slow admiration which he covered up by sneering, "Okay, what does it mean, since you're so damned smart."

"Even without the dream it would be easy to tell what is present," I said. "I'll cross my tees and dot the i's as I go along. The house is her current life, more specifically, her marriage to you. She no longer loves you and probably never did. But now she wants to get out of it. Leave the house. Going out the front door and down the steps is the honorable way. Going out the door sym-

bolizes telling you her decision. The steps are filing for divorce, going through with it, until she is a free woman. But waiting for her there is a bull, fierce and strong, pawing the earth and snorting. In other words, a lot of bull, which to her means a lot of talk and pressure she feels she would give in under and decide not to get the divorce. Unpleasantness. So she runs back into the house. Next she tries the back way, just running away without saying anything. The bull isn't there, of course; but the steps she must take actually to get away! She must pretend nothing is different up to the very moment she escapes. She will be nervous, you might notice it and ask her if she's upset about something. She will have to lie. Lots of lyin'! The lyin' might claw her in the pride, if she's caught at it. That would be far worse than the bull at the front door, the divorce route. But by now in her dream the symbolism has taken on a life of its own. She tries to will the bull and the lion to fight each other. Naturally they can never meet in combat because they are two incompatible alternatives. Her subconscious gives up and ends the dream."

I turned my attention to Leona Heatherstone. "But the dream is only one facet, is it not? You are in love with another man."

She shook her head, but her face was bloodless.

"Your subconscious saw me as

an instrument to enable you to escape to your 'dream man', didn't it? It convinced you the dream was harmless, but I warned you not to tell your dream unless your conscience was clear. Your future is obvious now, to me. Do you want to hear it?"

In the deathly stillness of the room the silence was deafening, intolerable. It bore in on Leona Heatherstone until she couldn't bear it another instant. "Yes," she whispered hoarsely.

"Your husband will not let you go," I said. "If you go to the other man your husband will kill him and take you back. You won't go, however. You will stay home, and forever live under the stigma of having wanted to go. Your husband will live in the hell of not trusting you. You will live in the hell of not loving him and being a prisoner of marriage.

"But then, it is a fairly common way of life among your friends. I doubt if there is anything resembling real love among any of you here."

I bowed stiffly from the hips, a mere suggestion of a bow. In the silence I went to the door and let myself out into the night. In the distance I could see the red blinker light of the tow truck. I broke into a swift gliding trot that covered the distance in a few short minutes. The night air was clean and refreshing. It bit into my lungs as I reached my car and the wrecker.

"You Smith?" one of the two men asked.

"Smith?" I echoed. "Oh. Yes, this is my car."

"The boss told us to give you a good fast job on it," he said, friendly. "You must be a good friend of his. He don't usually do that."

A twinge of regret seared into me. I half turned and looked toward the house. Headlights there burst into brilliance. Cars were starting slowly down the driveway. The guests were leaving.

It was understandable. How could the party have continued?

"No. He didn't know me," I said. "I'm just passing through."

"That's the boss," the mechanic said. "Heart of gold. Never another like him, in my books."

I turned away, looking up at the bright stars in the cloudless sky. I felt the cool night breeze caress my cheeks.

"Yup. Great guy, that Jack Bensen," the man said, expertly touching the hoist lever to tip my car over on its wheels. "My wife had to go to the hospital. Jack got the hospital to let me pay off the bill ten bucks a week. Know what he did then? Gave me a ten dollar raise. He could have offered to pay the bill himself, but that would have been charity. Anyway, after that, I guess I'm better enough to be worth the raise. Anybody'd be, don't you think?"

"Yes," I murmured. "Of course." I looked at the house. The lights in the parking area went dark as

I looked. Two picture windows gave forth a subdued illumination, two large eyes, dull with misery that I had created.

Chains rattled. The two mechanics talked in low tones, patient, knowing their job and doing it. Tolerant of each other and the inert metal that defied them.

"Okay, Bert," one of them said finally.

"You can ride in the cab with us," the other said to me. I turned to them then and obediently climbed into the cab.

The wrecker started cautiously, went a few feet then stopped. One of the mechanics got out and examined things, then returned to the cab and got in beside me.

"Uh," I said hesitantly, "Would you stop and let me out at the house? I want to thank Mr. Bensen."

"Shucks," the one called Bert said. "He don't want no thanks. But if you want to, we'll wait for you."

"No," I said, "you needn't wait. I can walk into town. It will be a while before you have my car ready. I would like the walk."

The other mechanic laughed. "You wouldn't git to walk. Jack'd insist on getting his car out and taking you in. We'll wait for you."

The wrecker came to a stop. I got out and walked up the driveway, my footsteps reluctant. The large room seemed empty beyond the picture windows, but the lights were still on. I resisted the im-

pulse to go over onto the lawn where I could see the entire room. I knew the mechanics must be watching me.

I knocked, my heart pounding furiously. I didn't know what I could say or do. All I knew was that I had to knock. I could not have gone on without trying to do something to undo what had been done.

The rapping of my knuckles sounded loud in the night. I wanted to turn and run, out into the dark fields, running forever. What could I say or do? Mrs. Bensen had cancer. Jack Bensen had been keeping that girl with the dirty teeth as his mistress. Leona Heatherstone wanted to be rid of her husband. Those were facts. I had taken those facts to revenge myself for—what? Something in my soup, a string in my food! I, who held the power to divine the destinies of men. For a lifetime I had devoted myself to the betterment of men, leading this one and that one into the path of enlightenment. In one weak moment my baser nature had gained the ascendancy.

In the quiet where only the muted sound of the wrecker motor could be heard, I prayed for ten thousand lives to atone for the karma I had taken onto myself in this one night. And then the door opened.

Jack Bensen looked at me vaguely. His face lit up with recognition. "Oh, it's you, Smith. Come on in."

Unable to answer, I entered. Mrs. Bensen turned from the bar where she had been mixing drinks. "Oh, hello, Mr. Ogaki," she said. "Won't you join us in a nightcap? What would you like?"

When I remained silent Bensen said, "Come on! Speak up, man. You'll never get another chance to be poisoned by as beautiful a woman as Maggy!"

"I will have—what your husband has," I said.

"Leave out the old lace, Maggy," Bensen said, laughing. He had had several drinks since I left, I realized. He slapped me on the back heartily to emphasize his laugh. I winced and smiled.

"You know, Smith," Bensen said as his wife turned to mix the drinks, "you're quite a guy. That fortune telling racket must get you once in a while. I can understand that. I got under your skin. When I used to run the garage myself before I married Maggy, many's the time I got sore at a customer and really socked it into him under the belt. But only if he asked for it—and I guess I asked for it. Turn your back while she mixes the drinks, John." He put his hand on my shoulder and turned me toward the picture windows. Together we looked down the road at the waiting wrecker and my car. "After you left, Smith, I went out in the garage and brought in the weed killer bottle and put it in my liquor collection. The way I figure, I've got it com-

ing—if Maggy wants to give it to me. No use beating around the bush. Not a jury in Osage County would convict her if she decided to give me what I deserve."

"They're ready," Mrs. Bensen said.

Dazed, I turned around with Bensen and accepted the drink his wife handed me. Was it poisoned? I had torn her house of cards down around her without justification. In her place . . .

Bensen, his face split with a wide grin of excitement, held his glass before my eyes. "Drink up!" he demanded.

We held our glasses and turned to Mrs. Bensen. She lifted hers. "To—our *separate* futures," she murmured.

Bensen lifted his glass to his lips and drained it, exhaling a deep sigh of delight. His eyes locked with those of his wife as he waited for what might come. Her expression was enigmatical.

I saluted her with my glass and, quickly, gulped its contents, while my imagination flavored it with the bitterness of poison, the odor of bitter almonds. I felt it hit my stomach. I felt fiery fingers reach out into my body. I held my breath, waiting.

And suddenly Bensen and I were looking at each other, laughing at each other.

But as suddenly he sobered. In one convulsive movement he had knocked his wife's drink from her hand. I saw then what he had

seen. The weed killer bottle had the lid off. Some had been used.

"You little fool," Bensen said. "You aren't going to let this damned Jap get your goat are you? So you have cancer! Have the guts God gave you and face it. Ogaki isn't God. Maybe he's close to being Satan, but there's such a thing as surgeons and cancer cures and transplanted organs. It only takes money, and we've got that."

"Silly," Mrs. Bensen said. "I only took the lid off."

Bensen gaped at her stupidly. Suddenly he was laughing again. "Did you hear that, John?" he gasped between paroxysms. "She put the fear of God in me!" He sobered again and looked at me through drunk suspicious eyes. "You sure she's got cancer? If she hasn't, by God "

Mrs. Bensen was pouring herself another drink to replace the one her husband had knocked out of her hand. Without turning, she said, "Aren't you being a bit silly, dear, threatening Mr. Ogaki if I don't have cancer?"

Bensen stared at her back, his eyes wide and startled. He turned to me. "God, what a man!" he said. His eyes narrowed. "Or are you the devil out of hell I think you are? Let's have another drink. I called doc Gray. He'll be here any minute—or by God I'll evict him from his office, since I own the building. He's going to find out if you're telling the truth."

Mrs. Bensen turned. "He told

the truth about everything else, didn't he?" she said. She turned to me, her gaze frankly curious. "Where is my cancer, Mr. Ogaki?" she asked.

"I'm not sure," I said. "I feel it is there. Your aura shows it. Definitely."

She looked in my eyes without flinching. Finally she nodded. "I believe you," she said. "If Gray doesn't find it I'll go to Mayos."

"We owe you something, Smith," Bensen said. "If you hadn't come along we might not have known about it. Why don't you stick around? Open an office or something? Not many men in these parts. Mostly stick in the muds. Not enough gumption to talk back to their mothers even."

"I—I think I'd like to, Mr. Bensen," I said regretfully, "but I have a large organization. A school with pupils all over the nation. I try to teach them how to understand themselves. It's hard . . ."

"If you change your mind let me know," he said. "Why don't you stay here tonight? We've got lots of room."

"No," I refused sadly. "As soon as my car is fixed I must go on. I must be on the coast by day after tomorrow. It's almost a thousand miles."

I shook hands with both of them. They stood in the doorway, arm in arm, as I went down the driveway to the waiting wrecker. They were still there, watching, as the wrecker began moving down the

highway toward town.

A car passed us. I watched it. It turned into the driveway, and I knew it must be Dr. Gray, perhaps grumbling about this call in the small hours of the morning.

"Yup," the mechanic Bert said, lighting a cigarette with one hand, the other on the wheel, "Jack's quite a guy. Heart o' gold. Rough as hell on the outside though."

The cool night air came in through the open windows, brushing my cheeks. I felt suddenly humble. I knew so little. How could I comprehend Godliness when it came in such an infinity of guises? In a moment of petty vindictiveness I had used my powers of divination to work harm on those I considered beneath my contempt—only to find them greater than I in my pride. Greater than I would be in ten thousand reincarnations.

I thought of the lecture scheduled for the following week in San Francisco. How could I dare to get up and speak? How could I presume to be a teacher, capable of

leading the spirit of any man into a better path, a path of self discovery? Yet . . .

I looked through the windshield of the wrecker at the unblinking stars in the cloudless sky. The surrounding countryside was sleeping under a blanket of quiet peace. The teen-age girls were at home asleep, their bubble gum parked under a convenient chair, no doubt. The dishwasher had long since scrubbed out the soup pot with his worn scouring pad. The crooked garage mechanic was probably out with sledge hammer and lantern, pounding other holes in the pavement to bring in business.

Suddenly I chuckled. It felt good to be alive, to be a part of the human race. I looked through the windshield, out past the unwinking stars into the black infinitude that was God, an impudent light dancing in my eyes. For this brief moment I could understand His Greatness, to have created such a masterpiece as man.

Humbly, imperceptibly, I bowed to Him.

ARE THERE ETHERIC ARMIES? *(Concluded from page 101)*

Greatest proof of all is the fact that in six years, no power of the army, air force or navy, of any government in the world, despite hundreds of opportunities, has been able to "ground" or even damage a single flying saucer. The reason for this would be hard to understand, if they were on our ma-

terial plane. What the army or air force can get a *photo* of, it can *surely* hit with its guns.

The flying saucers are etheric. And you can't shoot down an etheric ship, nor can you "kill" a "dead" man.

Those who have tried it, know it for a fact.

MYSTERY IN THE NEWS...

NOW "flying saucers" have swept-back wings — but don't draw any conclusions, they aren't our "own" aircraft! We're sure of this because the object we're referring to hung in the sky northeast of Dallas, Texas on January 6 for several hours. Our aircraft can't "hang in the air," much as we'd like them to! Watchers at the Civil Aeronautics Administration control tower at Dallas' Love Field, a Weather Bureau observer and police and fire dispatchers reported seeing the elongated object and said it gave off brilliant orange, red, green and bluish-white colors.

* * *

During December there were ghosts on television! At Blue Point, New York, three children watching the Ding Dong School program saw a woman's face superimposed on their TV screen. It remained there, no matter which channel they used, and it even stayed there when the set was unplugged. It turned out to be Francey Lane, singer on station WNBT, and the explanation was that she had been etched on the inner coating of the television tube by a tiny electronic explosion. What wasn't made clear was whether or not Francey was singing on the Ding Dong School program when the explosion happened. If any of our readers can

tell us, we'd like to know.

* * *

Ollie C. Maple of Houston, Texas has joined the ranks of those human beings who have died and come back to life. It happened this Christmas, and Ollie died on the operating table. But surgeons opened his chest cavity, massaged his heart, and after five minutes of death, Ollie came back to life. He suffered a partial loss of memory, due to damage to brain cells while dead, but otherwise was none the worse for his experience. He remembered nothing of his little excursion into the Valley of Shadows.

* * *

Spanish Fork, Utah, has had a strange experience. There has been much talk all over the world of "smogs" which have been variously of the killing type, and of the just plain bothersome type. But now the makers of smog, whoever they are, have a new one—the salt smog. It settled over the Spanish Fork area on January 3, and coated car windshields with crystals of salt which could not be dislodged by windshield wipers. We were always of the opinion the Great Salt Lake was salty because during evaporation the salt crystals were left behind and thus continued to accumulate, making the lake more and more salty. That's why they say the ocean is salty. Now, sud-

denly, we'll have to reverse the old belief. Salt doesn't always stay behind when the vapors rise. And maybe the ocean is salty for another reason. Maybe salt falls into it from the atmosphere. We get so puzzled sometimes!

* * *

About all we can learn from Richard Brandt, manager of the Yuba county airport near Marysville, California, about the flying saucer he saw over the airport on December 27 (it had bluish-green lights) was that he "hated to be quoted." He said it a half-dozen times. So we won't quote him. But really, Dick, we *believe* you. That stuff about people being nuts who see flying saucers has all been disproved. You are among the sane ones! It's only the nuts who deny it now!

* * *

Indianapolis, Indiana. A two-headed boy. It happened December 12, and in addition to two heads, the child has four arms, two sets of shoulders, three lungs and two stomachs. Here's one of the hard-to-understand mysteries of nature—she's so good at building a complex human being from a single cell, that you'd think such expertness would not allow for such a serious mistake as getting twins all mixed up in this manner. Is it just "chance" or did something or *somebody* make a mistake? Just in passing, this brings up a question in our minds: just when do "guardian angels" take over their

duties, at birth or at conception? And if there are such things as guardian angels, why shouldn't there be such things as "growth supervisors" to see that the birth goes correctly and the child is properly formed? What or who decides when there is enough hair, bone, skin, teeth and in this case, too many heads or too few hearts as the case may be?

* * *

Last October 16th, over Brigantine, N. J., two persons witnessed a large flying saucer discharge smaller disks from it. Once more they kept their story quiet until now for fear of "ridicule." MYSTIC Magazine wants to assure its readers nobody will ridicule a flying saucer observer any more, especially if careful observation is made. Your reports of such observations will be appreciated.

* * *

Here's a mystery for you! It happened in Chicago. Harold Glynn was called to the County Morgue to identify a body. He was positive—it was his brother Claremont. But then when he got to his sister's home to tell her the sad news, she informed him Claremont had left the house just a few minutes ago, as alive as she was. Harold ran after him, found him at his job, and wearing a bandage on his head. Claremont said he'd been hit by a hit-and-run car the night before. Both men went down to the morgue to view the body, and even
(Concluded on page 97)

The SEANCE CIRCLE . . .

Letters from the Undead

Dear Mr. Palmer:

I was very much impressed by your new magazine MYSTIC as it appeared on the newsstand this month, and I hope that you will find the support you need in order to carry out this new publication. Unlike its predecessor FATE magazine, you are approaching the public from a new angle in that you are fictionizing basic truths so that they will be read and assimilated by the "average person." After all, it is to the "average person" that these truths must be introduced and indoctrinated. We, as occult students, already have our background and establishment on the Path of Initiatory Knowledge, but it is those among the multitude of average men and women who need it most. Usually they will not bother to take the time nor intellectual application to study deeper books on occult science, yet deep in their souls they are groping for further understanding. Presented in a short fictional form is the best way for them. The seeds will fall and germinate perhaps at a later time. So you see, that is why I am so happy for your new venture in this field. I have read science-fiction for a number of years as a diversion from deeper occult studies and have on more than one occasion found deep truths hidden between the lines.

The article describing the personal experience of Mr. Angelucci with the Flying Saucers deeply impressed me. Although I have never seen one, I firmly believe in their existence and in the stories told about them by the many people who have had the favored fortune of seeing them. It has been my belief that they are from the Etheric Plane—a theory that you also expressed in your story *The Hidden Kingdom*. What will be the outcome of all this activity can only be known in the future, and I expect a not-far-off future. For we are approaching a time when the dissolution of the whole planet and of its life upon it, is endangered. We have advanced too far along materialistic, mechanistic ways and have not balanced our knowledge with a corresponding Spiritual understanding. When anything is thrown off balance there is bound to be a drastic reaction.

Your cover design was good, but I noticed that you made no mention of the most (to me) important content of the magazine, i.e. the article about the Flying Saucer experience. Most everyone is interested in the Saucer idea and it would attract them at once to see something printed on the outside cover regarding them. It was just by chance that I opened the magazine and that was the first

thing opened to.

On the whole, I think you have just about included every detail in the structure of your new publication, and again I say I hope it will continue and flourish.

Thaynne Westfall
No. Hollywood, Calif.

The article on Etheric Armies in this issue should interest you very much, as it agrees with your own theories. As for why we print fiction, you have expressed it very well. There is a vast field that cannot be touched if we must stick to fact. Theory and argument is also necessary, so we have included theoretical articles such as "Are There Etheric Armies?" as well as factual articles and fiction stories.

—Rap.

Dear Ray:

Have finished my ish No. 2 of MM. Am now convinced you have the best mag on the market, no, the best three. There are a lot of fantasy and s-f mags on the market but none combine the two as you do. S-f is fine in itself but a little touch of the unknown, the mysteries of the supernatural always gives a story color and life. It is the realism and mysteries which make for enjoyable reading. After all science doesn't know all there is to know and magazines such as MM bring that out. In reading a story such as **DEVIL'S EMPIRE** the reader is brought to realize that such things could've happened, **THE READER IS**

FORCED TO THINK, AND EVALUATE HIS SURROUNDINGS. Thinking never hurt anybody and Ray Palmer is responsible for a great percentage of the thinking being done today.

I'm not saying that narratives such as the **SHAVER MYSTERY** are true, I'm not saying that they are backed up by fact. Rather I am admitting the possibility of underground civilizations and such like. I don't condemn such stories, they're good entertainment, and while I read them I can't help but reflect on our world and how they fit into the scheme of things. The supernatural is possible, there are plausible explanations for everything; the sooner we begin speculating on those reasons and stop criticizing and slandering people who are already doing so, the sooner we'll find ourselves in our rightful and dignified position in the universe.

Ed Luksus
Gary, Ind.

You've got the right attitude, Ed. And we're glad you think as we do in what is needed to pep up the science fiction field. Glad you like our other magazines also. We try to put some mysticism into them all.—Rap.

Dear Mr. Palmer:

I have read with interest the first two publications of **MYSTIC Magazine**, and I approve of the stated motives for its issuance; but I have a few comments and sug-

gestions to make.

The field of Mysticism has become much less secretive during the last two decades, due largely to people questioning organized religion as the sole explanation for anything which might exist beyond our ability to rationalize. Mysticism, in its ideal form, is an enlightened state and leaves no room for superstition, because it explains that all that exists is a manifestation of natural laws, although we do not yet fully understand their meaning. The great Masters of the past, such as Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed, taught Mysticism in its purest form, but much of its meaning has been lost though the ages, although from it has evolved our present day standards of ethics.

I do not believe it is necessary to resort to the sensational to foster in intelligent human minds the consciousness of reality beyond the physical realm. There are among your readers some who cannot be reached by this method, but I am sure there are others, like myself, who would appreciate articles which will provoke serious thought. I think the article entitled "I Traveled in a Flying Saucer" was in that category. It is more than possible that there are beings of a higher plane, who have a more complete understanding of life's purpose and who wish to stress, to us, the importance of brotherly love, before we endanger the harmony of nature.

I realize I have dealt with a controversial subject in this letter, but I hope you will publish it, as I am interested in knowing whether there are kindred souls among your readers.

Miss Virginia Fulton

Fort Kobbe, Canal Zone

We believe you'll forgive us any "sensationalism we may inject into the magazine. Our reasons have been stated many times: we want to reach the people who do not already have any experience in this field, and we cannot do it by whispering, nor by going over their heads.—Rap.

Dear Rap:

I just have to answer that swell editorial of yours, in the new MM. I was glad of the information regarding Mark Twain. It was something I didn't know. And I can remember Halley's comet. I was only a little kid then. People were saying 'twas the end of the world. I went out with my father and mother and watched the comet the night they said it would destroy the Earth. It was summer and the night was warm. I lay down upon the grass and felt the warmth in the sweet ground of Earth left over from the day. Then I awoke in bed and it was the next day. I looked outside and found that nothing at all on Earth had been harmed by the comet.

I too, wanted to be a writer even then. Some of us seem to be born with a need to tell the rest what

we see and know. With me it has always been a must. A thousand times I've told me that I can't write because if I could it would be published. One night me and myself burned all our manuscripts, alone in the night with tears running down our face for dreams we thought were dead. And there was not to be any more writing at all. But like a drunk who swears off we fell from the wagon again and again. Why, Rap, is this everlasting burning hunger if I do not have the talent to get my stuff published?

But this was to have been about your editorial. You like to write what is in MYSTIC magazine. Well, I for one, like immensely what you write. And you believe in the power of the spoken word. Believe me, Rap, that is the greatest power there is. In the beginning was the word and the word was God. God said—And what God said was Law unchangeable forever.

There is no such thing as truth or falsity? I do not understand this. Perhaps you mean to say that all things are true, that whatever the human mind can believe that is truth. All things that are in existence are true. Falsity is what does not exist or exists illegitimately as a creation of the negative thought of man.

It is not only today but in all our yesterdays he who spoke contrary to accepted thought was an outcast. You have freedom of speech and of the press just so long as

you say and print the things the people are supposed to hear and read, or addle their already simple minds with shallow frippery. The prophets tried giving the truth and became martyrs. And a dead martyr is of no use to anyone.

Rap, I would like all of MYSTIC to be fact. But of course there will be many who like fiction and I know it must be some of both. Fiction is swell for entertainment, to read and forget. But fact gives one always something to add to the evidence already gathered in our everlasting quest for the final truths, the answers to the enigma. Give us as much of it as you can, please.

Now, concerning your reference to the probable harm done by the A-Bomb. It is quite possible that the weather has been considerably influenced by it. But something I have noticed. Out here on our West Coast I have noticed a number of people who have always had poor health have become quite miraculously blooming with health within the past two years. Even myself, couldn't manage more than a mere 110 for my 5 ft. 7 height, now weigh 125 lbs. I feel better than I have for over 30 years. For 20 years I held in abeyance threatened death through anemia. Blood count is now normal. I have not changed any habits that could account for sudden health.

In your Man From Tomorrow the prophecy is very true. But not just yet. The Battle of Armageddon is being waged in the spirit,

will burst into material being in the Holy Land.

Mrs. Dulcie Brown

Los Angeles, California

We say a thing is true today, yet tomorrow it isn't. There is constant change. Nobody can say for sure. That's why we say there is no such thing as false and true. Is it true that the Earth is the third planet of Sol? What if the sun becomes a nova and burns the Earth up? Then it would no longer be true. Time has a lot to do with it.—Rap.

Dear Ray:

Have just finished reading the January, 1954, issue of your new-est venture. How the previous issue escaped me, I don't know, as it certainly is my type of thing. My subscription will be forthcoming in the immediate future.

After reading the "Devil's Empire," and comparing it with the original Shaver stories (of which I have the complete file beginning with the January, 1945, issue of the old *Amazing*), I am beginning to wonder if Palmer is Shaver or vice versa. It follows the pattern perfectly.

My hobby for the past thirty years or so—since I was twelve years old, in fact—has been the occult and esoteric. Here in my basement room you will find many out of print works on the subject, particularly those dealing with the ancient Hebrew Quaballah, to which I have given a good deal of study. At one time I even owned

a copy of Manly Hall's large encyclopedia of Alchemical, Hermetic and Rosicrucian philosophies (which in my opinion is the last word as a reference work on all mystical themes). Unfortunately my copy was destroyed in a fire and I have never since been able to get together the one hundred and seventy-five to two hundred dollars that a replacement would cost.

To the exoteric student of Bible mysteries there are many things between Genesis and Revelations that are unexplainable. The esoteric student finds these same mysteries less troublesome. For instance, at the time of the fall in Eden, according to Genesis, God made Adam and Eve clothes of skin "to cover their nakedness." On the face of it this would seem perfectly clear. However, the original books of Adam and Eve, which I have before me as I write this, shed quite a different light on the matter. I quote:

"And upon thee, O Adam, while in My garden and obedient to Me, did that bright light rest also. But when I heard of thy transgression, I deprived thee of that bright light. Yet, of My mercy, I did not turn thee into darkness, but I made thee thy body of flesh, over which I spread this skin, in order that it may bear cold and heat."

For some reason known only to themselves, the good men at the council of Nicea in 321 A.D., discarded a great portion of the sa-

cred writings, declaring the rest only as "divinely inspired," thus creating our bible. The portions they discarded, strangely enough, were those which would have made the balance understandable. Where they received their authority and competence to judge on the question of divine inspiration, no one seems able to explain. Could it be that in making Christianity a profound mystery they anticipated a greater hold on the minds of men?

Gordon W. Hackbarth
Seattle, Wash.

No, I am not Shaver. But in rewriting his material, it took on my style. Thus, anything I write sounds like Shaver. Also, I added much to Shaver to make it more acceptable to the reader. I changed nothing, but I did amplify. Shaver, as Shaver alone, is hard, deep reading. As for the Lost Books of the Bible, they pose many questions as well as solve many. They are worth reading.—Rap.

Sir:

In the November issue of MYSTIC Magazine, Orfeo Matthew's Angelucci's True Mystic Adventure "I FLEW IN A FLYING SAUCER" article coincided with a spectacle experienced by myself, although my sighting took place a year later.

On the evening of May 10, 1953, I stood on the Venice, California Beach at Avenue 33. Looking over the ocean, at the sky, I saw a large red ball of light. From that ball

of light two smaller ones of the same color sailed away. After 45 minutes, two lights of the same appearance joined or mounted the larger ball. Then it flew rapidly away. I could not determine the size, distance nor rate of speed.

Alta Beane
Venice, Calif.

Dear Ray:

MM going monthly? Seems only a few weeks ago I got my Jan. ish. Thus far, I've gone through a few letters, the editorial, and a few stories. Probably what commanded my attention most was the letter section. Glancing through it, I found no comments on the stories featured in the previous ish. How strange and fitting.

Really, it's almost as if RAP casts some hypnotic spell over us, his admiring readers. Science Stories or Universe, I could write about and probably find something nasty to say. Somehow, in regards to MYSTIC, I can't bring myself to do such. After all isn't this mag written in the SPIRIT of Ray Palmer? This is HIS mag, the type of job he was BORN for. How could he miss turning out a hit?

You know, I was sincerely interested in Mrs. Ellis' letter. The attitude of her son intrigued me. Casting about in all directions, searching out the personalities and ideas of all my friends (I'm the same age as Mrs. Ellis' son) I found such a narrow-minded atti-



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tude to be the rule rather than the exception. In fact, it isn't hard to visualize myself as having such an attitude.

Looking back across the space of one short year, I can't help thanking God that I learned of such a person as Ray Palmer. I may not believe in the ability of stars to alter our behavior patterns, but I do admit it as possible. After all has anyone **PROVED** that they don't? Until such is **PROVEN**, I find it impossible to censor anyone who places faith in such things. After all, isn't it possible that the stars are outward manifestations of powers that **DO** control our lives?

For changing my whole outlook on life (no that isn't right; I don't believe anything can ever change a person's opinions if he really wants to hold onto them), rather for forming my whole outlook on life; I have Ray Palmer to thank. From the role of an unthinking believer, he has transformed me into a tolerant skeptic.

Just looking out on the world I can't help but doubt the ability of such an unthinking race with such "typed" minds ever to reach the stars.

Ed Luksus
Gary, Ind.

Heavens, Ed! Don't saddle me with so much responsibility; What if I'm all wrong—look at the people who would be misled, and I responsible! No, Ray Palmer isn't trying to influence people. He is delighted if they think their OWN

thoughts because he thinks his own in public. That is his sole purpose. You'd be surprised how much he learns, and changes his own thinking, from the response he gets via letters and so on. Ray Palmer owes more to his readers than they owe to him!—Rap.

Dear Sir:

I have had the pleasure of reading your January Issue of MYSTIC Magazine. Being familiar with this type of reading material, I feel free to say I think the magazine has a very bright future.

I do not think all of the contents should be in a fictional setting. You see there will be many others the same as myself that are well acquainted with this fact. It is fact you know.

I have had some interesting experiences and would like to know if you would be interested in some of them.

Helene B. East
East St. Louis, Ill.

Certainly, Helene, we'll be glad to consider your own experiences for publication. We welcome all kinds of material from our readers—true adventures, theoretical articles, fact articles, fiction, and what have you.—Rap.

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A VOICE SAVED MY LIFE

By

Carol McKinney

THIS did not happen on a dark moonless night in a graveyard, or any other such unlikely spot, but at about 8:45 A.M. on a bright sunny morning, along a well-traveled country road.

I had taken my husband to work in a nearby town that September morning and was speeding back home, my two small daughters playing in the back seat of our sedan. The car radio was not on. The road stretched across many small hills through a fairly well populated region of country homes and small farms.

I dropped my eyes to the speedometer as the car swept down a low hill, through the brief dip at the bottom and started up again. It was resting on 60 mph.

Quite suddenly, without any warning I heard a voice in my left ear, seemingly from outside the car, saying, "Slow down. Now!" I could not say today whether it was that of a man or of a woman. I only know it shocked and startled me deeply.

My foot went from the accelerator to the brake and the car coasted to a stop at the top of the small hill. What I saw as I looked down the other side was seared into my memory so deeply I'll never forget it.

In the right side of the narrow, two-lane road, half-way down the hill was a fire engine, putting out a small grass fire at the side of the road. In the other lane just passing the fire engine and coming toward me was a school bus loaded with children.

There was not room on either side of the road for a third vehicle to pass. If I had not stopped when I did, the car would have inevitably crashed into either the fire engine or the oncoming school bus; there would not have been time to act if I'd have gone on to the crest of the hill at the same high rate of speed.

So, if the voice I heard was all my imagination, as some people told me, I couldn't have heard it at a better time.



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